THE Nation.

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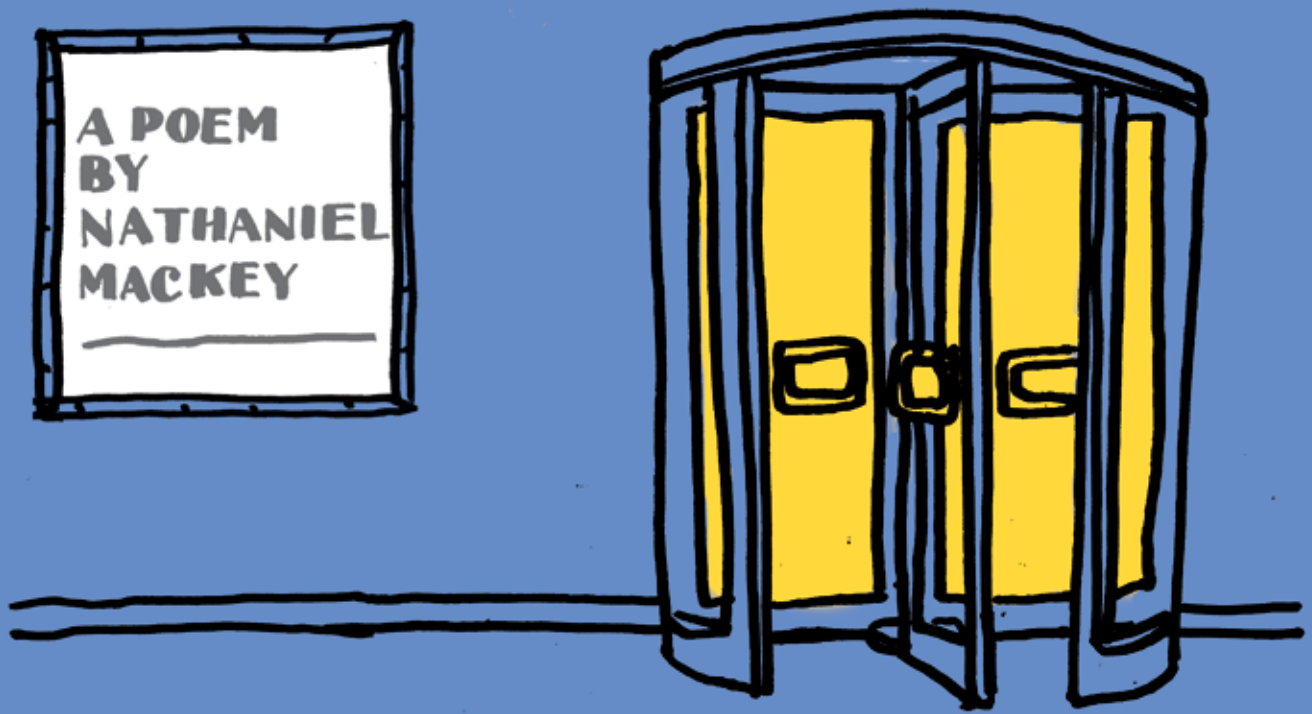

JUNE 7, 2010
TheNation.com

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Letters

Shill, Baby, Shill

Clinton, Ohio
I suspect the irony was not lost on your readers: the cover of the May 10 issue is dripping with oil and headlined with words such as "Oil" and "Corruption." A full-page ad on the back cover shows BP ("beyond petroleum"), posturing as "green," as its oil gushes into the Gulf of Mexico at a record rate.
Erica Greer

Mt. Tabor, N.J.
Can we not consider that running a full back-cover ad from BP is a conflict of your interests and ours? Isn't killing eleven workers and the unprecedented environmental disaster in the Gulf of Mexico reason enough to yank BP's claim of "opening new offshore areas to oil and gas production"? And shame on you for permitting this unscrupulous corporate giant to hide under a green sunflower.
Michael Spector, *Chair*
Green Party of New Jersey

The Editors Reply

We appreciate those who have taken the time to write us about the BP ad. As *Nation* readers, you are no doubt aware that small journals of opinion like ours are struggling financially. But even when times were better, censoring ads was never in keeping with our advertising policy (see TheNation.com/node/33589), which states: "We accept [advertising] not to further the views of *The Nation* but to help pay the costs of publishing."

Indeed, we often run ads whose values do not match those of our editors or our readers. Our advertisers have included Fox News, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Department of Homeland Security and others. Our publication of the BP ad in no way reflects an endorsement of its content. Running these ads does not inhibit us from publishing articles highly critical of corporate-owned mainstream media, unjust and ineffective drug policies, the Patriot Act—or oil companies. In fact, as readers have pointed out, Johann Hari's hard-hitting critique of the corrupting influence of oil-industry cash on mainstream environmental groups in "The Wrong Kind of Green" [March 22] appeared in the same issue as another BP ad. As longtime readers are aware, a wall between advertising and editorial content has always been a key part of *The Nation*'s tradition of independence—which advertising, regardless of its subject, helps to keep alive. —*The Editors*

Nil, Baby, Nil

Blacksburg, Va.
Re Jerry A. Coyne's "The Improbability Pump" [May 10]: the germ theory of disease is widely accepted, not only because it is true but because it is rather simple and good for people. The situation is different with the theory of evolution. It is complex, and most people don't have a clear understanding of it. But they are smart enough to know that it robs their lives of meaning—I am no more important than a flea or a tapeworm. Dostoyevsky understood this when he preferred Christianity (although not necessarily true) to nihilism—if there is no God, everything is permitted. If evolution had been accepted centuries ago, would we now have something better than what remains of Christendom and Western civilization?
Gordon Carter

Alexandria, Va.
There have been advances in physics since Darwin's time, including the concept of block time and the many-worlds interpretation of quantum physics. Time is an illusion, and everything that can possibly exist does and always has. We never even built anything. We found the absurdly improbable universe in which the desired objects always existed. Infinite parallel universes explain the absurd improbability of life better than natural selection.
Mark Scott Oller

letters@thenation.com

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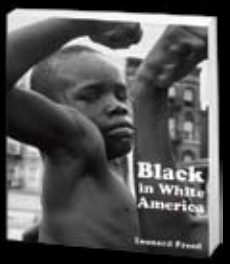

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Primary Colors

There were clear winners and losers in the May 18 primaries—and, yes, a distinct trend. The winners were Democratic insurgents and Republican outsiders—and, intriguingly, unions and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The losers included President Obama and GOP Congressional leaders Mitch McConnell and John Boehner. In 2010, populist anti-Washington sentiment—with a healthy layer of anti-bank and anti–big business messaging—plays well, no matter which party label is on a candidate. That's something Democrats must understand if they hope to prevail come November.

EDITORIAL

Pennsylvania Congressman Joe Sestak's impressive victory in that state's Senate primary was the headline story of the night. It was less a message for Arlen Specter, who had reached his sell-by date, than for a Democratic establishment that tried to sell a five-term GOP senator to Democratic voters. In Arkansas, Democratic Senator Blanche Lincoln, a centrist with conservative and corporate tendencies, was equally off-putting to base voters, who forced her into a runoff with primary challenger Bill Halter. The June 8 showdown will be a bitter battle between national Democrats backing a weakened incumbent and a populist insurgency powered by unions and the progressive netroots.

Don't think that Obama was the only Washington player who got on the wrong side of the voters, however. In Kentucky, Rand Paul's big Republican primary win was a blow to McConnell and the GOP establishment, who despise the mildly anti-interventionist stances taken by the son of antiwar Congressman Ron Paul. McConnell put his credibility on the line when he backed insider Trey Grayson. Paul, who had the support of Tea Party activists, promised in his victory speech that he won't play nice with either party's leadership.

So, what of the partisan divide? The news flash came from Pennsylvania's 12th District, where voters filled the seat left vacant by the death of Congressman John Murtha. This was supposed to be the big race for Republicans, who noted that the district backed John McCain in 2008 and has been trending to the right. Boehner threw everything he had into the campaign of GOP contender Tim Burns. Pelosi did the same for Democrat Mark Critz. But the savvy Speaker was sure to give Critz the space he needed to frame a relatively populist message that made few accommodations with the Obama administration. Pelosi had a big ally in organized labor, which worked the district well and hit all the right notes when it came to fair trade and busting the banksters. The result: a solid win for Critz.

Democrats are not in the clear, however. Despite all the Tea Party talk, there is at least as much turbulence on the Democratic as the Republican side. Anger at Washington is widespread. Democrats have to harness that anger—no easy task for a party that controls the White House, the Senate and the House—and be flexible enough to allow candidates to run as real populists. Like Halter, Critz was loud and proud in his criticism of big banks and big businesses that let workers and communities down by outsourcing jobs and factories. Those themes must be central to the Democratic appeal this fall.

Obama and his White House team might want to take a few notes from Speaker Pelosi and from labor leaders like AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka, who noted correctly that Critz's "victory demonstrates that when a candidate stands tall and proud on issues such as jobs and trade, the public will see through the lies and slime hurled by the right wing and big business."

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Any Given Sunday

Last September, I was at some off-the-record Washington dinner and happened to be at the table of a Democratic Congressman. He'd just gotten back from recess in his district, where he'd been subjected to the full Tea Party treatment. As he described the rage he'd witnessed, it was clear he was spooked. I remember thinking he was more scared of voting for the healthcare bill than he was of voting against it, and that was going to be a problem.

I thought about that Congressman this past Sunday as I watched more than 700 protesters from National People's Action gather on the front lawn at the home of Gregory Baer, deputy counsel for the Bank Regulatory and Public Policy Group at Bank of America. NPA was coming from the other end of the spectrum from the Tea Party, and was there to demand a meeting with Baer's boss, the bank's CEO, Brian Moynihan. They were black and brown and white, senior citizens and little kids sitting on shoulders and lots of teenagers. They had bullhorns and signs and chanted "Bank of America! *Bad* for America!" (which, I promise, sounds better as a chant than it reads on the page). To hush the crowd, organizers would raise their clenched fists, and instantly it would fall silent. This was disciplined bedlam: like some crazy hybrid of a hip-hop show and a picket line.

At first, it appeared that Baer was not home. But then one of his neighbors pointed him out, sitting in his car anonymously watching the proceedings. Once identified, Baer darted up his driveway and into his house, as the crowd chanted, "Shame! Shame!" He refused to meet or speak with the small leadership team or to call his boss to ask for a meeting.

I'm dispositionally inclined to cringe at actions like this: I don't like conflict; I feel bad for the dude who's having his Sunday ruined. But I got over that real quick when Trenda Kennedy of Springfield, Illinois, took the bullhorn on Baer's steps. "In America, every seven seconds one of our homes goes into foreclosure," she said. "My home is one of those!"

After losing her job in 2008, Kennedy fell behind on her payments, and last summer Bank of America foreclosed on her home. "Last November," Kennedy said, "my 20-year-old son died…tragically in a car accident. Thirty minutes after the coroner left, I got a phone call from Annette at Bank of America. I told her about the tragedy that had just happened to our family. Annette did not offer her condolences. Instead she said, This call is from a debt collector, and it may be recorded or monitored."

Sunday wasn't the first direct action NPA and its allies have undertaken, and it wasn't the last. The next day, as part of the "Showdown on K Street," activists stalled traffic on K Street and entered the office of Democratic lobbyist Tony Podesta. A hundred people from a Massachusetts group called the Alliance to Develop Power occupied Senator Scott Brown's office after his staffers had ignored repeated requests for a meeting to discuss foreclosures and financial reform. All of this is part of a nationwide series of direct actions called "Showdown in America," spearheaded by NPA, the People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO) network and the Service Employees International (SEIU). The campaign aims to dismantle the en-

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tire Wall Street–Washington corporatist axis, which gave us the financial crisis, the bailouts and 7 million foreclosures since 2008, a million of which have ended in repossession.

It's about damn time. We have witnessed the greatest implosion of American capitalism in nearly a century, and the only grassroots movement the cataclysm seems to have birthed is a right-wing populist backlash. When the country suffered a trauma that massively discredited the establishment rulers, the Democratic Party became the establishment. And progressive groups in DC, under stern White House orders not to cause trouble (don't show up at his door! he's a donor! we might nominate him for something!), descended into what one organizer calls "grotesque transactionalism."

"Showdown in America" is a rebuke to that tactic. Choosing direct action does not mean abandoning legislative mobilization, but it articulates a broader vision than just support for this or that amendment. "Now is not a time for tinkering," said NPA's executive director, George Goehl, at the organization's conference earlier that day. "We're not here to eke out a few victories along the margins. To make suffering a little less worse for people.... The brutal facts are that we cannot begin to build an economy for all of us when we have a democracy that works only for corporations and members of Congress."

If we're going to get reform on the scale we need, bank lobbyists and members of Congress alike have to be confronted with the terrifying thought that the system from which they profit might just be run over—that 700 angry protesters might show up on their lawn any given Sunday. CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Whacking the Old Folks

COMMENT

In setting up his National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, Barack Obama is again playing coy in public, but his intentions are widely understood among Washington insiders. The president intends to offer Social Security as a sacrificial lamb to entice conservative deficit hawks into a grand bipartisan compromise in which Democrats agree to cut Social Security benefits for future retirees while Republicans accede to significant tax increases to reduce government red ink.

Obama's commission is the vehicle created to achieve this deal. He ducks questions about his preferences, saying only that "everything has to be on the table." But White House lieutenants are privately talking up a bargain along those lines. They are telling anxious liberals to trust the president to make only moderate cuts. Better to have Democrats cut Social Security, Obama advisers say, than leave the task to bloodthirsty Republicans.

The president has stacked the deck to encourage this strategy. The eighteen-member commission is top-heavy with fiscal conservatives and hostile right-wingers who yearn to dismantle the retirement program. The Republican co-chair, former Senator Alan Simpson, is especially nasty; he likes to get laughs by ridiculing wheezy old folks. Democratic co-chair Erskine Bowles and staff director Bruce Reed secretly negotiated a partial privatization of Social Security with Newt Gingrich back when they served in the Clinton White House, but the deal blew up with Clinton's sex scandal. Monica Lewinsky saved the system.

Any recommendations require fourteen votes, and Obama has at least five loyalists who will protect him—Senators Dick Durbin and Max Baucus, Representatives Jan Schakowsky and Xavier Becerra, and former SEIU president Andy Stern. On the other hand, if Obama really wants to make a deal, these commissioners will very likely support him.

The people, once again, are kept in the dark. The Obama commission will not report its recommendations until after this fall's elections—too late for voters to express objections. Both parties assume they can evade blame by holding hands and jumping together.

What's extraordinary about this assault on Social Security is that a Democratic president is leading it. Obama is arm in arm with GOP conservatives like Wall Street billionaire Pete Peterson, who for decades has demonized Social Security as a grave threat to the Republic and has spread some $12 million among economists, think tanks, foundations and assorted front groups to sell his case. If Obama pulls the deal off, this will be his version of "Nixon goes to China"—a leader proving his manhood by going against his party's convictions. Even if he fails, the president will get some protective cover on the deficit issue. After all, he is targeting Big Government's most beloved and trusted program—the New Deal's most prominent pillar.

Obama's initiative rests on two falsehoods spread by Peterson's propaganda—the notion that Social Security somehow contributes to the swollen federal deficits and that cutting benefits will address this problem. Obama and his advisers do not say this in so many words, but their rhetoric implies that Social Security is a big source of the deficit problem. Major media promote the same falsehoods. Here is what the media don't tell you: Social Security has accumulated a massive surplus—$2.5 trillion now, rising to $4.3 trillion by 2023. This vast wealth was collected over many years from workers under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) to pay in advance for baby boom retirements. The money will cover all benefits until the 2040s—unless Congress double-crosses workers by changing the rules. This nest egg does not belong to the government; it belongs to the people who paid for it. FICA is not a tax but involuntary savings.

As a candidate, Obama assured voters that any shortfall was in the distant future and could be easily resolved with minor adjustments. As president, he has abandoned this accurate analysis and turned rightward without explaining why. He faces an awkward problem, however. Despite conservative propaganda, cutting Social Security will have no impact on the deficit problem that so stirs public anxiety. The White House knows this, and some advisers admit as much. So why is the president targeting Social Security?

Paul Volcker, former Federal Reserve chair and adviser to the president, declares, "In my view, we can deal with the Social Security problem fairly promptly." Cutting benefits, Volcker adds, "is not going to deal with the deficit problem in the short run, but it's confidence building." John Podesta of the Center for American Progress, another adviser, agrees but says, "Reforms could starkly demonstrate to skeptical debt markets that the United

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States is willing to take on a politically difficult fiscal issue."

In other words, targeting Social Security is a smokescreen designed to reassure foreign creditors and avoid confronting the true sources of US indebtedness. The politicians might instead address the cost of fighting two wars on borrowed money or the tax cuts for the rich and corporations or the deregulation that led to the recent financial catastrophe and destroyed vast wealth. But those and other sources of deficits involve very powerful interests. Instead of taking them on, the thinking in Washington goes, let's whack the old folks while they're not watching.

This issue is a seminal fight with the potential to scramble party politics. If Democrats can no longer be trusted to defend Social Security, who can be? The people from left to right overwhelmingly support the program (88 percent), and a majority (66 percent) believe benefits should be increased now to cope with the loss of jobs and savings in the Great Recession.

Citizens can win this fight if they mobilize smartly. We can do this by arousing public alarm right now, while members of Congress face a treacherous election and before Obama can work out his deal. Some liberal groups are discussing a "take the pledge" campaign that demands senators and representatives sign commitments to keep Hands Off Social Security Benefits. If politicians refuse to sign, put them on the target list for November. Barack Obama is standing on the third rail of politics—let's give him a warning jolt. WILLIAM GREIDER

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

As Elena Kagan's Confirmation Hearing Approaches, We're Reminded of John Roberts's Promise to Be an Umpire Calling Balls and Strikes

Regardless of which laws he likes,
He's only calling balls and strikes.
Of balls and strikes that he has eyed,
The union pitches all look wide.
When criminal defendants try
To throw a strike, it's always high.
Consumers make for easy calls:
Their pitches simply all are balls.
By chance, the pitches that are great—
The ones that nick or split the plate;
The ones deserving of ovations—
Are pitched by cops or corporations.
A left-wing lawyer sharp as Darrow
Will find the strike zone much too narrow.
Behind it, crouching, is the Chief,
Quite confident in his belief:
Regardless of which laws he likes,
He's only calling balls and strikes.

What We've Become

This psychiatric examiner concludes with a reasonable degree of professional certainty that Mr. Johnson does have a mental abnormality.
—Jacob Hadden, PhD, evaluating a prisoner for the State of New York's Office of Mental Health

When Mr. Johnson was 18 to 20 years old he had a lot of sex. He thought about sex a lot, too. He met girls on the street or partying. They got it on at Motel 6 or in rooms in apartments with mattresses on the floor, sometimes near another couple. He didn't ask about age. Everyone was young, usually poor, usually solo and scared for a sea of reasons that might vanish at least for a while in a kiss. One girl was 13, another 15. Mr. Johnson "used charm and coercion to secure sexual contact," and boasted about his conquests, sometimes dramatically. Call that Exhibit 1 in psychiatric examiner Hadden's conclusion that Mr. Johnson is a sicko who requires indefinite civil confinement now that he has completed a criminal sentence.

Exhibit 2: Until he was 20, Mr. Johnson "led a nomadic lifestyle," was reckless and impulsive, had no long-term plans and "changed locations and relationships often" in New York City and upstate. He has "no formal work history," having made a living selling drugs until a bad deal and a guilty plea on that and two counts of statutory rape and reckless endangerment sent him up. Abandoned by his parents as a child, too much for his grandmother to handle, he had been thieving, surviving on the street and in and out of correctional institutions from age 9. He once said he didn't think he'd live past 24.

Exhibit 3: Mr. Johnson went to strip clubs "once or twice." In prison he "looked at *Buttman* (hard-core pornography magazine), but now doesn't." At 33, he "doesn't currently masturbate, but did years ago." It's unclear whether Examiner Hadden thinks Mr. Johnson is a sicko because of overindulgence or manly restraint. In an unsolicited, notarized response, Mr. Johnson wrote, "You had a lot of officers that used to sell [porno] years back in the prison system. I don't masturbate and never told [Hadden] that I did years ago."

Exhibit 4: After thirteen years in prison Mr. Johnson "is sexually preoccupied." He "may have deviant sexual interest in pubescent females, but this is not clear given that he was relatively young at the time of his offenses." Still, because he insists he didn't know the two girls were underage—and once stated, "If they're old enough to be in the street and smoking dope, they are old enough to fuck"—"he is prone to further sexual contact with underage individuals because of deficits in his emotional capacity to understand why this is wrong."

Exhibit 5: Mr. Johnson is married. His wife, by whom he

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The MIT Press

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PERSONAL URBAN MOBILITY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

William J. Mitchell, Christopher E. Borroni-Bird, and Lawrence D. Burns

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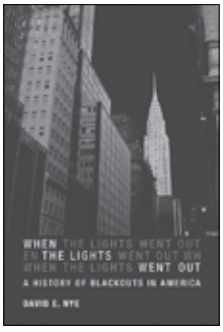

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A HISTORY OF BLACKOUTS IN AMERICA

David E. Nye

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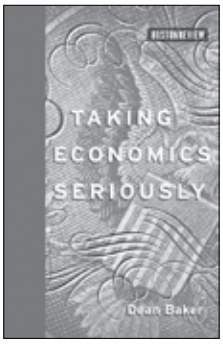

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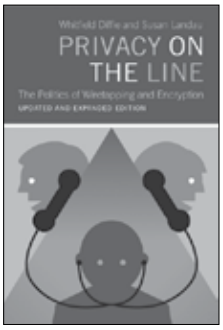

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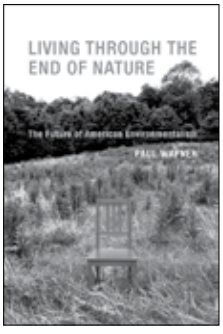

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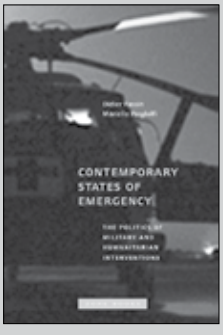

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claims four children, ages 12 to 20, is a certified nursing assistant who lives in Richmond, Virginia. Examiner Hadden notes that Mr. Johnson says "he loves his wife," but she is of interest to the psychiatric examiner primarily as an accessory to his sexual obsession. "He claimed that his wife 'says she wants it all the time.'" Mr. Johnson denies he said that but agrees that fulfilling her sexual desires "is my obligation as her husband."

Mentally abnormal because he was a randy youth, because he had sex with randy minors, because he lived by the logic of the street and the lockup, because he fought and lied, because he might fantasize, because he wants to please his wife: any way he turns, Mr. Johnson is a sicko.

Most important, he is HIV-positive. "Mr. Johnson" is an alias, one of many used by Nushawn Williams, whose name became notorious in 1997 when health officials in upstate New York plastered it, his face and HIV status on posters calling for his former sex partners to get tested.

The state claimed Williams deliberately tried to infect women. No evidence supports that claim, but Williams was labeled "the devil," because he had been informed he was HIV-positive and didn't tell. His sex partners didn't tell their status, either, or look out for their own safety or his—that part of the sexual equation was ignored. To officials, the women, many white, were all victims of Williams, who is black, and their numbers mushroomed in a media panic to hundreds without basis beyond say-so. Thirteen women tested positive, though the source of infection cannot be pinpointed. His guilty plea involved three individuals.

Now every past bad act equals a personality disorder in the present, as the facts, half-truths and fabrications of 1997 merge in the state's filings to keep Williams locked up under Article 10 of New York's Sex Offender Management and Treatment Act, passed in 2007. Williams should have been a free man on April 13, but he entered State Supreme Court in shackles on May 6, when a judge ruled there was probable cause to hold him as a sexually dangerous person.

Williams's attorney has filed a motion to dismiss. If the judge punts, a six-person civil jury may decide whether the state has demonstrated by "clear and convincing evidence" that Williams has a mental abnormality that might, hypothetically, predispose him to commit a sex crime at some unknown future time. If yes, the jury will punt back to the judge, who will decide to confine him to a mental institution or to house arrest, GPS monitoring, etc., perhaps punting back in deference to Examiner Hadden and other medico-scientific hacks on the state's payroll.

The insidious nature of panics is that they exceptionalize the ordinary, and then make ordinary the legal machinery supposedly instituted for extraordinary circumstances. Civil libertarians and the left mostly don't get too exercised about the punishment industry's capacity to roll out a new product every few years when the qualifying offense involves sex. Williams was made into a monster without much dissent, but some 350 people have been prosecuted for HIV-related "offenses" whether or not anyone got infected. Thirty-two states specifically criminalize nondisclosure, handing down sentences of twenty-five, thirty years, even dangling the prospect of the death penalty. New York and others tweak existing law, with similar draconian sentences. To follow legal developments on criminalhivtransmission.blogspot.com, assembled by the international civil libertarian Edwin Bernard, is to peer into the cold, dead heart of the society we've become.

If New York succeeds in confining Williams to the bughouse, he will join about 3,000 Americans quietly put away not for what they've done but for what someone fears they could do. About the only organized opposition is from advocates for the garden-variety mentally ill, who worry about stigma by association. In the recent *Comstock* case every Supreme Court justice accepted the underlying fact that *some* government has the power to order the civil commitment of "sexually dangerous" persons, and Elena Kagan argued the case.

The best that Williams can hope for is release with lifetime monitoring. His wife, Nina, had been learning about sex offender registry requirements from Virginia State Police when news came that Nushawn wasn't getting out. "He's had plans for the future," she told me, "happy thoughts, pleasant thoughts. He's seeing a different way of doing things. And to hear he might be civilly committed, it's, like, wow, someone's gonna come in and say, 'After all these years you're the same old cat that you was when you were thrown in prison.' It crushed him; it really did. He's a tough person, but he cried. He has emotions, you know."

In his unsolicited response to Hadden, Williams apologized to those he hurt. "I'm in search of redemption," he wrote, quaintly.

JoANN WYPIJEWSKI

@TheNation.com

The country's anti-incumbent mood led to progressive wins in the recent primary elections. Watch Katrina vanden Heuvel on *Democracy Now!* in **Progressive Primary Victories**.

In **Who's Afraid of Rand Paul?**, Robert Scheer writes that he is one "lefty liberal" not the least bit unhappy with Rand Paul's victory in Kentucky's Republican Senate primary.

Ari Melber joins Eliot Spitzer on *The Dylan Ratigan Show* to discuss Arizona's controverisal new immigration law.

Attorney General Eric Holder's push to expand the public safety exception to *Miranda* suggests the Obama administration has bought Bush's framing on terrorism, writes Aziz Huq in **Holder Gambles With Terrorism Suspects' Miranda Rights**.

In **Confronting the Euro-Crisis**, Jordan Stancil writes that the bailout may stanch the bleeding for now, but if the EU does not strengthen economic governance, new crises will erupt.

As Israel wages a battle for its legitimacy, a new book details the country's alliance with South Africa's apartheid regime. Max Blumenthal reviews *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel's Secret Relationship With Apartheid South Africa* in **The Banquo's Ghost of Israeli Foreign Policy.**

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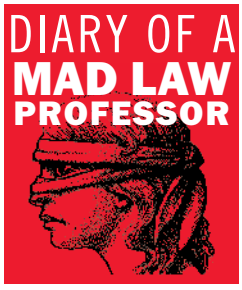
Patricia J. Williams

She-Lawyers and Other Improbable Creatures

As we get closer to the hearings on the nomination of Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court, I expect we will have to endure yet another season of vulgar sexism. Sonia Sotomayor had to refute allegations that she was too strident and bossy; Kagan is already facing speculation that she's a lesbian—in that unfortunate schoolyard universe where, as with Hillary Clinton before her, "lesbian" is defined only as "unwomanly." This has nothing to do with Kagan's actual sexual orientation, whatever it might be; rather, I believe it is testament to the work that remains to be done. Forty years after the birth of modern feminism, we are still not able to think about women who attain certain kinds of professional success as normatively gendered.

Officially, the English language does not have gendered nouns. Yet it seems that we do invest certain words with gendered exclusivity—nurse, fireman, CEO, lawyer—if only as a matter of general parlance. There's a story that used to be ubiquitous about thirty years ago: a father rushes his son to the hospital after a bicycle accident. The boy is whisked into Emergency and ends up on the operating table. The surgeon looks down at the boy and gasps, "Oh, my God! This is my son!" The story would end with the question, "How is that possible?" Much puzzlement would ensue until the "Aha!" moment: the surgeon was the boy's mother. In that era, the likelihood of a surgeon being female was so negligible that divining the answer became a kind of "test" of radical feminist sensibility.



This story is interesting not merely for what it reveals about embedded sexual stereotypes; it also tells us that these stereotypes are not written in stone. If the notion of a female surgeon is inconceivable to a particular audience within a certain time frame, it is surely the product of history, politics and practice. Thus stated, it would appear that a significant shift in the number of women in medicine would change those perceptions, challenge the underlying assumption. Similarly, in a field like law, where about half of law students are women, one would anticipate that their sheer numbers would render their presence a nonissue.

If, however, the very word "surgeon" or "lawyer" is still unconsciously gendered, then integrating medical and law schools will be a much more layered project. If that is the case, then we're battling not just the on-the-ground challenge of getting women into medical school but also the conceptual difficulty of allowing them to be surgeons and women simultaneously. This latter problem depends on how deeper levels of culture and meaning are processed and understood.

The blogosphere is ablaze with comments about how Kagan does her hair or whether she wears pants (Hillary Clinton was married, so she was accused of "wearing the pants in the family"). This chatter isn't really about Kagan's sexual preference as much as it is about whether she exhibits masculine traits. The interrogation is not limited to her style or fashion sense but, as with Sotomayor, is about her personality and hobbies. She likes poker! She swings a softball bat! Not only does anything she touches suddenly get characterized as a male pursuit; she is amply endowed with a Midas touch of testosterone. Success itself is masculinized.

Lera Boroditsky, a cognitive psychologist at Stanford University, studies whether the languages we speak shape the way we think. She has showed empirically that lexical or syntactic differences affect how we think about objects or concepts. For example, in German the word for "bridge" is feminine; in Spanish, French and other Romance languages it's masculine. Boroditsky has shown that in German, native speakers tend to describe bridges as elegant or beautiful, whereas Spanish or French speakers generally refer to a bridge in masculine terms: as strong and massive and muscular. They don't just speak of the bridge as such—they think of it as such; they feel it as such.

English speakers might anticipate that the power of such cognitive categorizing would extend to us through other kinds of expressive traces. Perhaps it ought to prompt us to interrogate historically raced or gendered words—if not nouns generally, then particular professions dominated by totemic phenotypes: where "lawyer" is masculine or "nurse" is feminine, or "president" is white and "alien" is brown.

Similarly, there is research to suggest that even races are gendered in our culture. Psychologist Phillip Atiba Goff has done studies showing that blackness tends to be hypermasculinized while Asian-ness tends to be hyperfeminized. This means not just that black men are seen as more masculine than other men but that black women, too, are perceived as more masculine than other women and are more often mistaken for being male. Likewise, not only are Asian women perceived as hyperfeminine; Asian men are seen as much more feminine than other men. This kind of invisible taxonomizing may lead one unconsciously to think of, say, a black woman in a formal evening gown as "funny looking" or as though she were in drag. It may lead one unconsciously to look at an Asian man in a law firm as not strong enough to lean on the big difficult client. Even when we are committed to diversifying the workplace, we cannot ignore the deeper, subtler resistance to anything or anyone who looks "out of place."

Of course, a good part of the drubbing Elena Kagan will face is calculated politics as usual. But I think the very persistence of narratives of unwomanliness with which to browbeat women in public or professional life suggests that the quest for integration, equality and political legitimacy is linked to problems of cognition, language and culture. It also suggests that we might want to incorporate some of this new knowledge into our strategies for overcoming social disparities and glass ceilings. ■

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Eric Alterman

Ain't That America…

The debate over Barack Obama's nomination of Elena Kagan to the Supreme Court reveals just how powerfully identity politics has corrupted our political discourse. But like so much about the 1960s, what was originally a leftist plot to "subvert the dominant paradigm" is now being used to reinforce that paradigm, as white male Christian America attempts to reassert its control of our institutions in the face of the unavoidable truth of a new, multicultural nation.

Despite the dearth of Kagan's legal paper trail, her political and philosophical views might be profitably extricated from a close critical reading of her memos and briefs as a domestic policy adviser in the Clinton administration and as solicitor general. Alas, these could hardly matter less. Kagan, you see, is a single New York female Jewish refugee from Manhattan's Upper West Side. In our political context that counts as five, possibly six, strikes against her, depending on whether one believes all single women to be likely lesbians. The *Washington Post*'s Richard Cohen kvetches that she is not a mother. *National Review*'s Ed Whelan worries that she doesn't know how to drive. This year's Pulitzer Prize winner for commentary, Kathleen Parker, complains that Kagan grew up in an urban environment with nary a "Baptist church" or "ballet class." MSNBC's sometime fascist sympathizer Pat Buchanan states the case most forcefully: "Jews, who represent less than 2 percent of the US population, will have 33 percent of the Supreme Court seats." Add it all up, explains Parker, and Kagan is "miles away from mainstream America."

This idea of "mainstream" or "the real America" is a curious one. It comes up repeatedly, when Tea Party types attack Obama, Sonia Sotomayor or just about anyone who could not be comfortably cast in *It's a Wonderful Life*. In its inception it arose from the collective imagination of a group of heavily accented Eastern European Jewish immigrants who "invented Hollywood," as their biographer Neal Gabler put it. Sarah Palin, as is her wont, demonstrated its malevolent potential when it is combined with ideological obsession and willful ignorance when she announced during the 2008 campaign, "We believe that the best of America is in these small towns…and in these wonderful little pockets of what I call the 'real America,'" which she equated with "very patriotic, um, very, um, pro-America areas of this great nation." Sorry, Sarah, but if small towns are the "real America," then the nearly 80 percent of us who live in metropolitan areas are saying, Thanks, but no thanks. (Oh, and by the way, quitter, Guilford County, North Carolina, where you made your dumb remarks, went for Obama by eighteen points.)

Of course, this phony "real America" is obviously a state of mind and not much more, though it is hardly less powerful for being so. In fact, the less it comports with reality, the stronger its believers need to cling to it. How else to explain the anti-tax vehemence of Republican radicals arising at exactly the moment when Americans are paying the lowest tax rates since 1950? Why is John McCain succumbing to the know-nothing nativism he built his entire persona opposing? What's happening, as Mark Schmitt predicted in 2008, is that the Republicans are settling on white Christian identity politics as the only card they have left. Why else would McCain have adopted the embarrassing slogan "The American president Americans have been waiting for"? Schmitt also noted that David Frum—second only to David Brooks as the liberals' favorite conservative—endorsed this poison politics when he wrote, "Republicans have always been the party of American democratic nationhood," while Democrats "attract those who felt themselves in some way marginal to the American experience… intellectuals, Catholics, Jews, blacks, feminists, gays…. As the nation weakens, Democrats grow stronger."

Most Americans can look at their lives and see the fallacy of these claims. As a certain Illinois state senator said to the Democratic convention in 2004, "We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the red states. We coach little league in the blue states and, yes, we've got some gay friends in the red states." But when times are tough, Americans take comfort in such claims nevertheless. Sadly, they receive considerable encouragement in this endeavor from the so-called liberal media. For instance, MSNBC's Mika Brzezinski famously sympathized with Palin's decision to quit her job as Alaska governor and cash in on her celebrity as something that could be well understood in "real America," which she contrasted with "urban America." This came months after the same network planted a correspondent outside Zabar's—ground zero of Upper West Side Jewish life—who demanded to know why so few people in the neighborhood supported McCain and Palin. Nearly everyone responded politely with reasons to prefer Obama. Still, the MSNBC hosts were shocked that a famously liberal neighborhood contained real liberals. "That is an important cultural piece, and it proves why so many people are so right—no pun intended—to really loathe so many on the left. Those people are so close-minded," explained admitted plagiarist and MSNBC host Mike Barnicle. "There's some really, really hostile people on the left who just think they are intellectually superior," added the program's conservative host, Joe Scarborough. And remember, MSNBC's programming—even with Scarborough, Brzezinski, Barnicle and Buchanan—is typically treated as the liberal equivalent of the ferocious conservatism one finds 24/7 on Fox News.

Ironically, by picking a dedicated establishment centrist to replace Stevens, Obama has replicated this tiresome political pattern: unleashing the dogs of right-wing culture war without giving the left much of a reason to want to fight back.

If not now, Barack, when? ■

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Books & the Arts.

ADRIAN BELLESGUARD

Eyes Wide Open

by LORNA SCOTT FOX

The 2009 Nobel Prize for Literature, in which bets were on Amos Oz or Philip Roth, shocked the world—again. The cries of "Jean-Marie Le what?" greeting Le Clézio's 2008 selection were replaced in Britain and the United States by a chorus of "Herta who?" and "Not another unknown European!" Well, for once our stupefaction is not simply a consequence of our notorious Anglocentrism. Fully five of Herta Müller's more than twenty works of fiction, poetry and essays had already been translated into English, against a mere three into French.

And yet the choice of an uncomfortable, marginal author like Müller, writing about life under the dictatorship she escaped from in 1987, bears a message that's significant for the United States and Britain, countries that sailed relatively complacently through the storms of the past century. It recalls how recently most of Europe was a vortex of violence to rival the exotic places we prefer to read about in works of translation, if we must read them at all. To award the prize to a still-young veteran of European totalitarianism, whose work further shows the continuity of its structures and effects, is a radical choice. It does not exactly celebrate the liberal-democratic victory over communism, because there's no happy end to the story. Somewhat like the Austrian Elfriede Jelinek ("unknown" Nobel laureate, 2004), Müller avoids psychological and social realism, projecting nightmare visions onto an affectless screen of language, and ultimately depicting abuse, guilt and trauma not as historical-political contingencies but as the very condition of the contemporary psyche.

Multiple identities and the specter of ethnic cleansing are the more commodifiable aspects of Müller's universalism. She was born in 1953 in a farming village of the Banat, a region of Central Europe richly layered by invasive cultures over the past millennium. After it came under Habsburg rule in 1716, Catholic Germanic settlers were invited to repopulate the land, and these immigrants created monolingual communities like Müller's native Nitzkydorf. In 1919 the areas around the Banat's capital city of Timisoara joined Romania, but the ethnic Germans—"Banat Swabians"—resisted assimilation. Despising the Romanians, they were ignored in return until catastrophe arrived with the Red Army. Persecution intensified under Ceausescu, who came to power in 1965; deportations, expropriations and emigrations reduced their number from around 250,000 at their peak in 1900 to some 20,000 today.

In light of this insular ethnic German background, an aphorism by the Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran seems relevant: "One doesn't live in a country, one lives in a language." But this is as paradoxical in Müller's case as in that of the many Romanian intellectuals who lived in two languages, the other usually French, including Cioran himself, along with Eugène Ionesco, Tristan Tzara, Panait Istrati and George Enescu. Müller came to writing through four languages. As she has put it with reference to the Aktionsgruppe Banat, the close-knit group of young writers and dissidents she hung with during her student days: "In Timisoara, the language of writing co-existed with the dialect (Swabian) and the lingua franca (Romanian). To this was added the political cant of the regime, which distorted language to its own advantage. Hence our care to avoid any words and concepts that had been vio-

Lorna Scott Fox is a journalist and translator based in London.

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lated or sullied by politics.... To write about our reality, we had always to search for an innocent language."

A hopeless quest, as Müller acknowledged in her Nobel acceptance speech: "In writing, it is not a matter of trusting, but rather of the honesty of the deceit." Still, the attempt is patent in the arduous novelty of the language, overwrought yet deadpan, a succession of phenomenological statements whose relation to one another and to reality is left hanging. Questions lack question marks; emotions refuse to flag themselves with any facile change of tone or pace. Take this paragraph from her first book, *Nadirs* (1982), touching on the frequent theme of maternal indifference:

> Mother is still standing on the long ladder. The rungs are flattening out the soles of her feet. The soles of my mother's feet are right above me. She squashes my face. Mother stands on my eyes and pushes them in. Mother stomps my pupils into the white of my eyes. Mother has dark blue mulberry stains on the soles of her feet.

The literary voice is flattened by mistrust of rhetoric and cliché in the clandestine effort to reconstruct the self. As we read this harrowing *Autofiktion*, especially the early pieces, we must keep in mind certain experiences that were "total," as in totalitarian: it was impossible, it seems, to intuit other modes of psychic or civic existence. And it wasn't just a matter of communism.

Müller's village upbringing is evoked in the fourteen vignettes and eponymous long text that constitute *Nadirs*. They convey a frightening place of inarticulate, incestuous families, petty powers and casual cruelty, reminiscent of rural backwardness in Zola, Thomas Bernhard or Flannery O'Connor, but with a sensuous venom that recalls Baudelaire's prose poems. Death stalks human doings, decay trumps rebirth in nature, sex is grotesque and the child is already cowed and guilty. "You look at the ground, you see your bloody shoes walking far off and alone, and fear winds itself through the hovering white plumage of the faded dandelions." When *Nadirs* appeared in "expurgated" form (one wonders which passages were left *in*) her village was furious, and the authorities began to take a serious interest in Müller all over again. By this time she had already undergone the harassment that informs *The Land of Green Plums* (1993) and *The Appointment* (1997), though she felt able to write about it only after she got to Berlin.

The harassment amounted to psychological torture. Not content with repeated interrogations (a creepy blend of mellifluous sadism and Alice in Wonderland logic, best rendered in *The Appointment*), the secret police, or Securitate, melted in and out through the walls of her apartment, playfully leaving signs of their presence such as cigarette butts or displaced furniture. There were death threats; Müller was smeared as an agent of the state; friends, always possible agents themselves, sometimes turned up dead, classed as suicides. How to write about such things?

In This Essay

Nadirs
By Herta Müller.
Translated by Sieglinde Lug.
Nebraska. 122 pp. Paper $16.95.

The Land of Green Plums
By Herta Müller.
Translated by Michael Hofmann.
Metropolitan. 242 pp. $25.

The Appointment
By Herta Müller.
Translated by Philip Boehm and Michael Hulse.
Picador. 224 pp. Paper $15.

The Passport
By Herta Müller.
Translated by Martin Chalmers.
Serpent's Tail. 93 pp. $12.95.

Traveling on One Leg
By Herta Müller.
Translated by Valentina Glajar and André Lefevere.
Northwestern. 149 pp. Paper $16.95.

Müller's response to a world in which nothing has a reliable meaning is to say and not say: to sow clues, to fragment chronology and bodies, to suppress connections while stringing elusive links across the text, as if to build alternative organisms inhabiting a *samizdat* reality beyond the pervasive reach of an internalized surveillance. In *The Land of Green Plums*, for instance, barbers and nail clippers abound; acts of pruning, snipping and mowing crop up throughout. But it's not just an imagery of repression, mirrored in fits of self-harm. Müller once wanted to be a hairdresser, and her attraction to sundering, dispersing and rearranging elements has found expression in a parallel practice of collage-poems that bears on her obsession with words as material, talismanic objects.

Words can also be renovated by cross-linguistic layering. Müller learned Romanian as an adolescent, and the metaphors of that language—full of animal symbology, like the country's popular fables—mate with her mother tongue to produce strange hybrids. Such operations get lost in English, of course, and even Germans are stumped by the repeated comparison of man to a pheasant in *The Passport* (1986). To understand its resonance for that bitter story of escape, one needs to know that the flightless Romanian pheasant is an emblem of frustration. *The Land of Green Plums* is originally titled *Hertzier*, a neologism cued by the closeness in Romanian of *inima* (heart) and *animala*. Translator Michael Hofmann offers "heart-beast" for "*Hertzier*" in the text: the heart as an unruly entity inside the ribs, as in a cage. In *The Appointment*, a father is dreamed being neatly cut open so that the stunted melon-wife in his chest can be replaced by his mistress in the form of a peach. Müller's transformational poetics solidifies emotions and thoughts into discrete objects, while objects, in turn, become animate or personified. Discovering that her best friend has betrayed her, the narrator explains,

> I saw Tereza in pieces: two little eyes, a long neck, pudgy fingers. Time stood still; Tereza should go but she should leave her face here, because I missed it so. She showed me the scar under her arm where they'd cut out the nut. I wanted to take the scar in my hand and stroke it, without Tereza. I wanted to rip my love out of me, throw it on the floor and stamp on it. Quickly lie down where it was lying and let it crawl back through my eyes into my head.

The Land of Green Plums is based on Müller's life as a student and a translator in a factory. It begins with the narrator's fascinated dislike of a fellow student cornered into prostitution, then suicide, a kind of "there but for the grace of..." scenario; it stages the primal ethical scene, recounted in several articles and speeches, in which Müller was sacked for refusing to spy on her friends; it mourns the narrator's beloved co-worker Tereza, who finally spied on her. After meeting three German-Romanian boys the narrator engages in nebulous subversion, hiding the smuggled books that set the four apart, both from their origins—"The books were in our mother tongue, but the silence of the villages, which forbids thought, wasn't in them"—and from the wider culture, which was a peasant one in proletarian disguise. The country people "had said to themselves, no more sheep, no more melons. Like fools,

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they had gone chasing after the soot of the city," but all their "crude" hands can produce are "tin sheep" and "wooden melons." One of the intellectuals, Kurt, is banished to a distant slaughterhouse, where he is repulsed by his co-workers' addiction to drinking blood and by his own complicity in it. Dispersed, the group communicates through coded letters that are intercepted by the sinister interrogator Pjele, an almost supernatural personage with a dog avatar also called Pjele.

This surreal account of a strangled life in which friends try to preserve enclaves of dignity while forced into deceit and compromise cuts periodically back to the menacing landscapes of *Nadirs*. Such scenes are even grimmer, to my mind. Governments can change, but the strictures of an archaic Catholicism seem to have already damaged this child—while the adults appear stunted by a combination of the same dour tradition, plus history. Somewhere at the root of things, we are given to understand in Müller's elliptical way, lies her father's guilt as an SS officer in the war. "Father keeps the graveyards deep in his throat, between his collar and his chin, near his Adam's apple. His Adam's apple sticks out and is locked up. That way the graveyards can never pass his lips." Many of the Banat Swabians followed their ethnic allegiances to join the Wehrmacht, and a terrible price was exacted when they lost: in 1945 tens of thousands were deported to concentration camps in the Ukraine, Müller's mother among them.

And yet the timelessness of this benighted patriarchal society, with its corrosive effects on men, women and children, impresses us beyond the historical incidents. *The Passport*, about a German-Romanian miller trying to bribe his way out of the country and selling his daughter to do so, paints in lush, cryptic strokes a picture of misogyny and corruption that could apply to many a village, in any century, under any political system. In this sense Müller's indictments go beyond the denunciation of communism to question the very essence of vertical authority structures, beginning with religion. Last December she told an interviewer from *Le Monde*, recalling how she dared not commit the sin of undressing for a swim when out with the cows, that she thought God was watching. "At catechism, they used to tell us: 'God is everywhere.' In fact he was the first dictator!"

God is watching, the regime is watching, you are watching your back. Müller's *oeuvre* might be summed up as a writing of (justified) paranoia, which makes the reader an accomplice in watchfulness. The spies try to guess what the character's comings and goings might mean, the character tries to guess if that red car parked outside means anything, and the reader tries to guess at what lies unspoken between the sentences. As in collage or poetry, causality and consequence must remain concealed: it's an interrogator who says triumphantly, "You see, things are getting connected." Müller's great achievement is to make paranoia textually palpable. Importantly, *Traveling on One Leg* (1992)—based on her arrival in Germany in 1987—takes reticence to extremes. The text is obstinately, hermetically visual, the protagonist always engaged in defensive seeing:

> Every day there were five workers on the scaffold.
>
> Irene had picked one, the one with the bandanna and shoulder-length hair. He was the one she watched.
>
> Irene didn't want to know more than she saw about him. She saw him participating in the noise on the scaffold. He raised his arms and lowered them.

People expect refugees arriving in "free" societies to be healed in an instant, to dump their baggage and turn into grateful models of resilience, making a new life for themselves by doing our dirty work. But exile is a further trauma for many, involving loss and alienation, a new backdrop to old instilled fears. Irene sees no cause to relax in the West (her Admission Facility officer resembles an interrogator), and among the things she sees are loneliness, neurotic shopping and a covert authoritarianism: Berlin might turn into "the other country" overnight. Above all, she has brought the struggle against madness with her. One strategy is to make pictorial collages, as Müller did before turning to word collages. Lyn Marven has observed that these collages have enabled a gradual bifurcation of the work: the parataxical impulse reserved for the poetic disposition of individual words that "stare at me," Müller says, from newspapers, and the prose thereby released for a more articulated, expansive narrative, where the unsaid finally breathes through.

The Appointment revisits themes like the shadow play of suspicion, the uses of sex in the perversion of desire and the violence of the state (a border killing; the second great deportation, to the Baragan Plain in 1951). But by Müller's standards *The Appointment* is a declarative, transparent text—and an unexpectedly humorous one. It revolves around the narrator's tram journey toward an appointment with her regular interroga-

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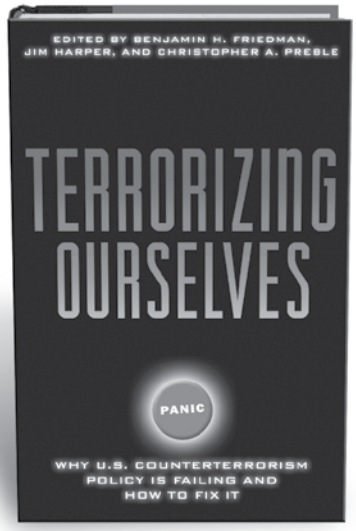
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tor, Albu. She speculates about the other passengers in between thinking about her husband, Paul, a sweet, clumsy drunk, and mulling over her precarious life. Resistance to fear is no longer embodied in the opacity of language, so much as in the creative imagination of the heroine and others surviving on a knife-edge, with a total lack of socialist solidarity: there are hypocritical party meetings, ingenious scams and general skiving off. After losing her job for putting marriage proposals into the pockets of suits she sewed for the Italian market, or "prostitution in the workplace," the narrator realizes that hardly anyone else goes to work:

> Unlike me, they are all paid to run around, having made up stories of burst pipes, illness, or funerals to tell the boss, and even bask in the sympathy of their colleagues and superiors before setting off on their outing. Just once I had my grandfather die because I wanted to buy a pair of gray platform shoes.... I lied, went into town, bought the shoes, and then the lie came true. Four days later at dinner my grandfather fell from his chair, dead. When the telegram arrived early the next morning, I took my three-day-old gray platforms and held them under the tap to make them swell. I put them on, went to the office and said I'd need the next two days off since my kitchen was flooded. Whenever I tell a bad lie, it comes true.

Being superstitious, she decides to save lying for the interrogations but keeps herself sane with counting games—little protective spells that merely recast the compulsion to scrutinize appearances and interpret signs, which is the given of life under dictatorship. Her stories are relayed in a voice so beguiling in its innocence, ditziness and occasional well-aimed rudeness that this chronicle of dread flies on joyous energy. After a tough session with Albu, the narrator flings herself to the ground in the park. "I couldn't have cared less if I'd been lying below the grass, dead, I would have welcomed it, and at the same time I liked living so damned much. I wanted to have a good cry and instead wound up laughing myself silly." Is it significant that Müller has finally stepped into the skin of a Romanian narrator? This is certainly the most attractive character she's created, making the discovery that occurs at the end of the tram ride doubly, unspeakably, horrifying—proof that even if the writing has become warmer, this artist will not succumb to the sentimentality of post-'89 fantasies (like that wishful German film about a spy with a heart, *The Lives of Others*). Müller makes clear that it's impossible, even for her "good" protagonists, not to be deformed by the system.

Müller should not be expected to change the subject anytime soon. She knows that the new Romania is run by the same old Securitate, still keeping its eye on her, as she found on recent trips. In Germany too she's an outsider, with her Romanian-scented dialect, filtered into literary German. Her journey from a farm bereft of books to Oslo confounds expectations. Her art is equally unplaceable: part therapy, part history, part formal experimentation. It's a continual testing of language between the originary "silence of the villages" and the cant of every regime—Müller is no less wary of liberal ideologies, whether feminism or individualism. Better, perhaps, to embody concepts, to materialize emotions and magically turn the flux of discursive realities into a cache of objects, achieving what her narrator only imagines: "Instead of these thoughts we're constantly mulling over, it would be better to have the actual things inside your head, so you could reach in and touch them." The care for looking and touching situates this author, if anywhere, among the dispossessed and the exiles, down in the poetic realm of the concrete particular, which is the only real source of universality. It's a lonely writing of vigilance that reminds us to keep our eyes wide open. ■

SEAMUS MURPHY, VII NETWORK/AP

Men enter a video store in Jos, Nigeria, in 2007.

Imperfect Cinemas

by EMILY WITT

Nollywood
The Video Phenomenon in Nigeria.
Edited by Pierre Barrot.
Indiana. 147 pp. Paper $16.10.

Nollywood
By Pieter Hugo.
Prestel. 120 pp. $49.95.

Kenneth Nnebue had a problem. It was 1992, and the Lagos businessman needed to unload a shipment of videotapes. He thought they might sell faster if he recorded some kind of entertainment on them, so drawing on his first moviemaking experiment, a Yoruba-language home video called *My Mother Is a Witch*, he quickly wrote a screenplay for a low-budget movie that would be performed in Igbo with a subtitled version in English. In it, a man named Andy, frustrated with a string of failed entrepreneurial endeavors and acting under the influence of a highly persuasive cult, ritually sacrifices his wife in return for riches. The opulence he acquires after gulping down a chalice of her blood, however, is spoiled when her ghost begins haunting him incessantly. First he goes mad and loses everything; then he

Emily Witt is an American writer based in Cambridge, England.

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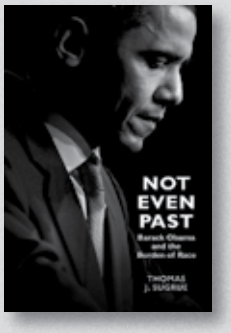

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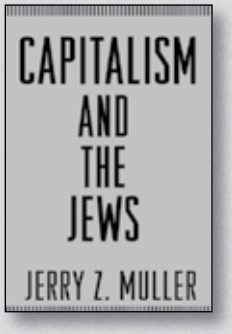

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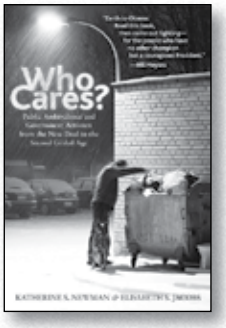

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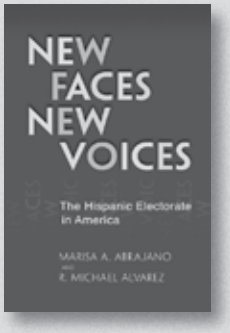

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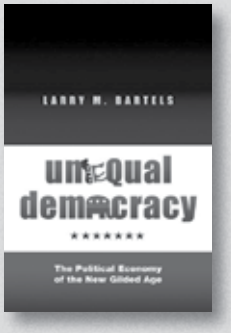

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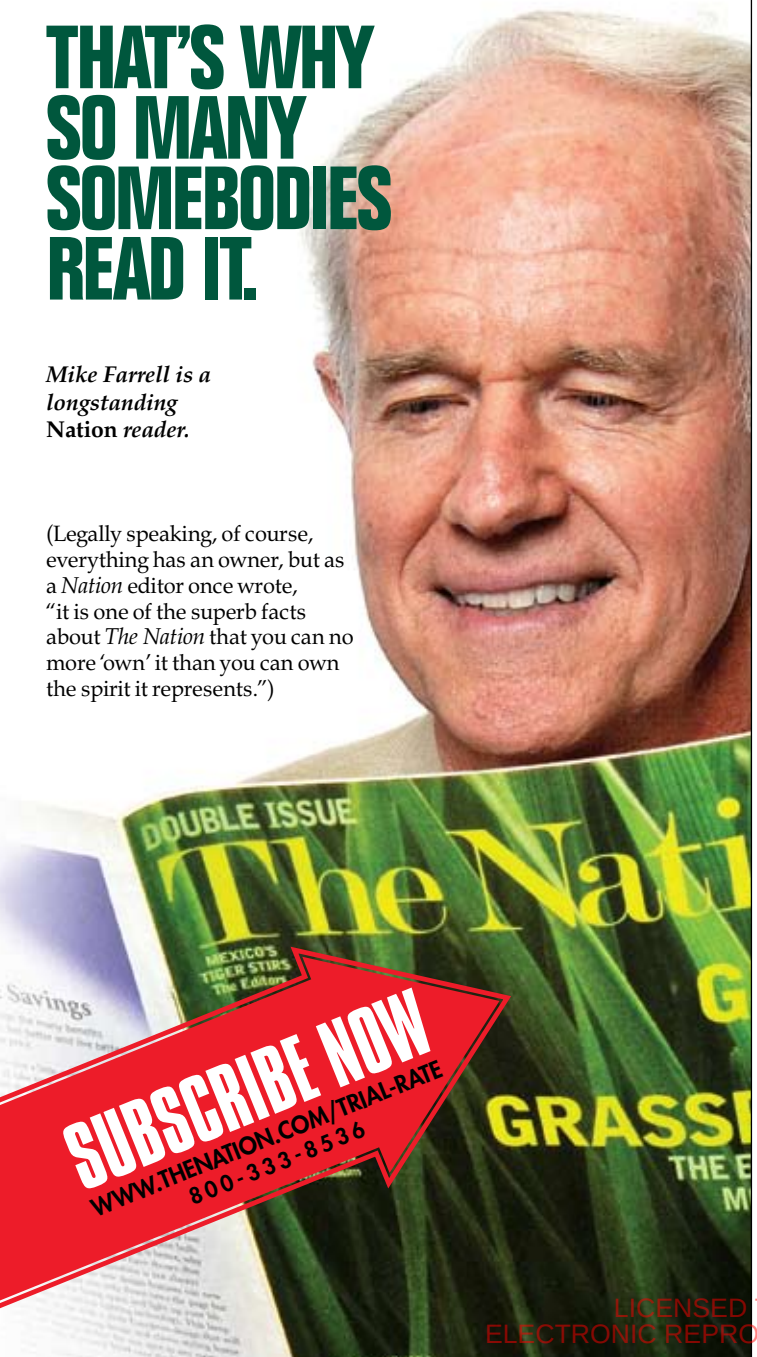

goes to church and finds redemption.

That, at least, is the origin myth of Nnebue's *Living in Bondage*. Despite its sketchy production values and melodramatic acting, the film struck a note with the Nigerian public, selling somewhere between 200,000 and 500,000 copies. Nnebue maximized his earnings by selling the movie in two parts. In the process, he spawned an industry specializing in stories of betrayal, witchcraft and redemption.

The speed with which Nollywood has grown since 1992 has bewildered many outside observers. So has its spread beyond Nigeria's borders into the continent at large and its success at challenging the Latin American *telenovela* as the dominant form of popular entertainment in Africa. Exact figures are impossible to compile, but Nollywood's audience is presumed to be in the millions. Crammed seven or eight to a video CD, sold in markets alongside bootlegs of the worst that Hollywood, Bollywood and Hong Kong can churn out, the 1,500-plus movies birthed by Nigeria's video movie industry in a typical year dominate the television screens of sub-Saharan Africa, even in non-Anglophone countries like Cameroon and Niger. An entire satellite channel, Africa Magic, was created by the South African subscription network M-Net in 2003 to beam Nollywood offerings from Cape Town to Nairobi. Yoruba- and Hausa-language versions of the channel were added in Nigeria this year. An estimated 600,000 video CDs are printed each day in Lagos alone.

In 1993 another iconic African film, *Guelwaar*, was released by the late Ousmane Sembène. The "father of African cinema," Sembène was an auteur, poet and intellectual who briefly left his native Senegal after independence in 1960 to study filmmaking in the Soviet Union. *Guelwaar* is the story of a Christian man whose body is accidentally buried in a Muslim cemetery, and Sembène uses the tale to explore interreligious strife, government corruption and dependence on foreign aid in Senegal. As in his other films, the overt politics of *Guelwaar* exemplify the goals of a postindependence cinematic movement, when nationalized film schools in countries like Mozambique and Guinea and groups like the Francophone Federation of African Filmmakers promoted the ideal of an anti-imperialist African cinema. Often assisted or funded by sympathetic leftist intellectuals from Europe and the Americas, the filmmakers of Sembène's generation studied Eisenstein, Tarkovsky and Godard; they read Fanon, Camus, Marx and Amílcar Cabral. They exemplified an African cinema that, in the words of Kenyan novelist Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, paid "equal attention to both the principle of instruction and that of pleasure" and envisioned filmmaking as a process of guerrilla cultural reclamation and political consciousness-raising. As Kenneth Harrow explains in *Postcolonial African Cinema*, first-wave African cinema had an agenda, which he identifies as the following:

1. African film is important in the communication of history, in the correction of past misrepresentation of history.

2. African film is important in writing back to Hollywood and back to misrepresentations of Africa in the mainstream media.

3. African film represents African society, African people, African culture.

4. African film should be the site for truth.

5. African film is African.

African film, in other words, was burdened with ideology. It also tended to attract a lot more viewers abroad than at home. This dis-

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parity was often attributed to monopolistic channels of distribution that privileged secondhand prints of American and Indian movies, the public's annoying preference for escapist entertainment or plain old capitalist rapaciousness. Only rarely was the occasionally puritanical didacticism of the films considered to be a source of their lack of appeal.

Guelwaar was screened in New York City. *Living in Bondage* was not. The *New York Times* celebrated *Guelwaar*'s depiction of "the ways in which ceremonious rural manners have been changed by modern life," noting in particular that the characters wore "Western felt hats" with their traditional garb. *Living in Bondage*'s Andy wears acid-washed jeans. In his moment of ill-begotten wealth he drives a Nissan Pathfinder. The producer of *Living in Bondage* was out to make a buck; the director of *Guelwaar* wanted to make a statement. *Living in Bondage* changed African moviemaking forever; *Guelwaar*, despite its beauty, did not.

Academics and critics have scrambled to explain how a profitable indigenous movie industry mushroomed organically in Nigeria, just like that, and became wildly popular despite a cable-access aesthetic and interminably repetitious plots. A recent attempt to figure out exactly what happened is *Nollywood: The Video Phenomenon in Nigeria*, a collection of essays edited by Pierre Barrot, a cultural attaché with the French Embassy in Algiers. (Most of the essays not written by Barrot were contributed by Nigerians working in Nollywood and West African journalists.) The book compiles, if in a somewhat disorganized and slipshod fashion, an overview of an industry whose defining characteristic is the absence of any centralized infrastructure. Just as many Africans have spurned the electricity grid, the land line and the corporation for the solar panel, the cellphone and the individual entrepreneur, Nollywood has eschewed the studio system and formal distribution networks for a DIY ethos. The movies are produced on a small scale and often shot in houses and on side streets. They can cost as little as $10,000 to make. Shooting is completed in as few as five days, and footage is typically edited on home computers with Adobe Premier or other amateur editing programs. The channels of distribution are those of piracy: video CDs and VHS tapes are copied and distributed through kiosks, booths and sellers on motorbike or foot. Speed in distribution is imperative; plagiarism is so commonplace, and the pace of production and distribution so fast, that a popular movie will face competition from knockoffs, frequently starring the same actors, within weeks of its release. Except for informal venues where proprietors charge a small fee to watch a video on a television, public screenings are nonexistent, and the bulk of the movies are viewed at home.

Nollywood has little patience for auteurs or originality. Barrot's book describes a mechanized chain of production that doesn't indulge anything so arcane as the creative whimsy of a particular director. Barrot has compiled fourteen "film profiles"—brief summaries of a few of the thousands of films Nollywood has produced in recent years—that provide a handy overview of the industry's stock plots. The profiles suggest that Nollywood is cinema only in the sense that genre fiction is literature—the movies are intriguing less as discrete works than for their ability to depict themes of contemporary Nigerian life en masse. In their variations on the political thriller, the tragic romance and the horror film, they employ regional nuances to explore pressing issues: sexual politics, violence, corruption, immigration to the United States and Europe, and the divide between urban and rural life in Nigeria.

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The President Must Not Die is a leaden thriller in which the president of Nigeria is kidnapped for a ransom of $60 million. As Barrot notes, the president is "finally released, at the end of a desperate fight, by a group of young, sexy, woman warriors, who use their skills and grace in karate to great effect (their small feet are used on several occasions to crack the vertebrae of the villains as they lie on the floor)." The movie was originally called *The President Must Die*, but according to Barrot the government censorship board deemed the title to be politically incorrect "in a country where about half of the heads of state since independence had died with different degrees of violence, before the end of their term of office."

I watched the beginning of *The President Must Not Die* on YouTube. I think my favorite scene is one when, after the president's kidnapping, the vice president calls a cabinet meeting. Various ministers and members of the armed forces sit in white leather chairs in a war room with a gold pendulum clock, paisley drapes and a soccer game on television in the corner. As the vice president loudly berates them for having lost their boss, they frown at one another sadly in close-ups. Suddenly one of them is pulled aside by an aide. They engage in a tense whispered conference. The official nods and stands up.

"I have just been informed of a possible clue. I have to leave now, sir," he says, clearly relieved to have an excuse to escape from the meeting.

"That's OK," says the vice president, sighing with resignation.

The official waves cheerily to his colleagues and walks out, only narrowly avoiding bumping into an incoming secretary. The meeting continues, and the remaining representatives of the Nigerian armed forces seem far more frightened by the sudden appearance of an extremely irate first lady than by the prospect of a leaderless country.

The scene's awkward pacing is the kind of flaw that most critical writing about the Nigerian movie industry—*Nollywood: The Video Phenomenon in Nigeria* included—likes to highlight and dissect. Given the pace, the low cost and the technical means available, it should not be surprising that most Nigerian movies are bad. Then again, what does "bad" mean in a global film economy when *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*—in which various main characters function as product placement for General Motors—can pull millions of moviegoers from the deepest recesses of their couches? In the case of Nollywood, "bad" means, on the technical side, a home video aesthetic, poor sound mixing, blinking special effects in primary colors, jarring lapses in continuity and boom microphones sinking into the frame. In the realm of the artistic, "bad" means wooden acting, excess melodrama, displays of consumerism that make Imelda Marcos look like Mother Teresa, baroque screenplays that don't always cohere into a narrative whole, failure to suspend disbelief (indeed, an active effort to encourage it), wailing, catfights and evil mothers-in-law.

A lot of criticism about Nollywood, therefore, concerns itself with resolving the fundamental question of why these usually not-very-good movies (judged, perhaps harshly, according to the above criteria during a few Saturday afternoons spent on YouTube) are so very popular. Their home-video aesthetic isn't just tolerated but relished by viewers, and there is evidently some consternation in certain circles that the postcolonial African tradition of lush, 35-millimeter, French Embassy–funded allegorical films and centralized-government-sponsored Marxist epics has been eclipsed by films like *Baby Police*, a popular franchise starring a dwarf who harasses unsuspecting citizens at roadblocks (think Gary Coleman as a Nigerian police officer who occasionally leads Bollywood-style group dance numbers). The recurring gag: "Look here, small boy! You are meant to be in a classroom studying!" Or take *Beyonce & Rihanna*, in which a singer named Bernice battles it out with a rival performer named Rhyme for the affections of a producer named Jay. Bernice even has a sidekick, Saphire (imagine, if you can, a Nigerian Shakira). There are girl fights, stinging insults ("Who are you, a glorified handbag?"), luxury SUVs and McMansions that evoke suburban Atlanta more than Lagos, all shot in a low-budget style. *Beyonce & Rihanna* can make for a painful viewing experience, and it can't be what the socialists had in mind when they called for an "imperfect cinema."

Zina Saro-Wiwa is tired of manifestos about guerrilla filmmaking and assertions of "African" identity. She is tired of claims that Nollywood, with its consumerism and fetishism of global pop culture, is somehow undermining an authentic Nigerian culture. More than anything, Saro-Wiwa, a filmmaker and the daughter of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian human rights activist and writer executed by the regime of Sani Abacha in 1995, is tired of the puritanical notion of African identity that she says has been imposed from abroad. "For all its failings," she writes in her contribution to the introduction of *Nollywood*, a book of Nollywood-inspired photographs by Pieter Hugo, "this industry provides a vision of Nigeria and Africa that has been wrested from the ideologies of foreign bodies and distributors that want to impose their own vision of Africa. And this is a wonderful and long-overdue turn of events. For the first time and in the purest, rawest form, Africa is representing and interpreting Africa."

She's right, of course, and her sentiments are echoed by Chris Abani, who contributes another of the volume's introductory texts. Abani is sarcastic, quoting an unnamed Nigerian director he heard say at a panel, "The last Francophone 'art' film I saw showed a ten-minute shot of a camel standing in a desert doing nothing, not even shitting. I may not know what art is, but this is not it." (The moderator apparently responded, "Gentlemen, please.")

Given the strength of Saro-Wiwa's argument, the images following the text are jarring and unfortunate. Hugo, a 33-year-old white South African, has produced a collection of photographs that feels decisively retrograde. The photos are inspired in large part by the demons and zombies of Nollywood's horror genre. The so-called *juju* movies often feature witchcraft, the undead, ritual sacrifice or, as in one movie I found on YouTube, called *Night of Vultures*, an indeterminate diplomat from the spirit world with a latex vulture claw. The claw could have been the lingering effect of some ill-advised hex but seems more likely to have been conjured up from a post-Halloween bargain bin at Wal-Mart. Vulture man roams a fluorescent-lit hotel with his stiff Frankenstein gait, disappearing and reappearing on its linoleum floors, slinking up to bedsides in his colorful *agbada* robe and strangling shrieking residents with his vulture claw. It's positively Lugosian, if *Dracula* had been shot on video in a cheap hotel. And, as Saro-Wiwa says of the conventions of Nollywood horror movies, "Despite the amateur dramatics approach to costuming, the aesthetic visualisation of the occult in action draws on science-fiction: knives fly magically through the air and evil spirits fire killer laser beams from bright green eyes. Spirits appear and disappear using basic camera techniques of stopping the camera." Overall it's pretty campy, good-humored stuff. If there's going to be bloodshed, I certainly prefer watching a live

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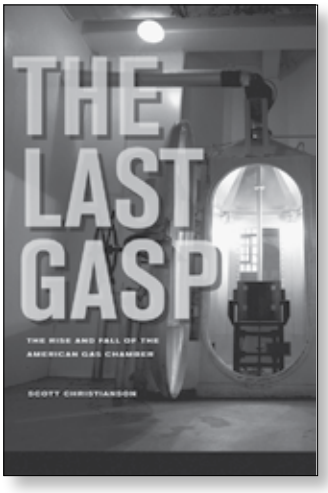

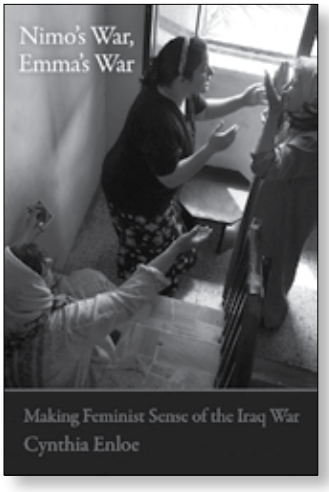

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goat sacrifice to the latest installment of the *Saw* franchise.

Hugo's photographs, however, are discomfiting. The work is not documentarian; Hugo does not act as a roving eye on the set of a Nollywood shoot. Rather, he re-creates scenes from Nollywood *juju* movies in an exaggerated manner; his subjects bear closer resemblance to the zombies in Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video or the infected of *28 Days Later* than to the goofily attired monsters of the Nollywood movies. His collection of portraits features glassy-eyed Nigerian actors wielding machetes or AK-47s, blood dripping from their fangs. One shows a disembodied hand stuffed in a woman's mouth. In another, three women are photographed with their stomachs exposed, draped in chains. As *Nollywood: The Video Phenomenon in Nigeria* explains, even if Nollywood films are not reluctant to showcase violence, they are notoriously prudish when it comes to sex and nudity, thanks to the limitations imposed by government censorship boards and the tastes of an often-religiously conservative audience. In this light, Hugo's photograph of a naked man in a Darth Vader mask or of a bare-breasted woman with a dagger through her torso seems particularly farfetched.

The photographs are unsettling not only because they evoke some of the symbols of nineteenth-century colonial racism (the "horrid faces" and "grotesque masks" of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* come to mind). They also seem to gather and exaggerate other leitmotifs of darkest Africa common to contemporary European and American news coverage of the continent: a chaos of rape, violence, child soldiers and plague, heightened through the editorial fondness for "local color." Here's Jeffrey Gettleman, the chief of the *New York Times*'s East Africa bureau, reporting on rape in Congo in 2008: the country is "a place riven by civil war and haunted by warlords and drug-crazed child soldiers." This sensational imagery—"haunted" and "drug-crazed," in particular—is laden with a certain ghoulish mysticism. Perhaps intended to subvert such typecasting, Hugo's photographs might end up reinforcing it.

Regardless of how one interprets Hugo's photographs, it would be overgenerous to credit them with an insightful view of Nollywood. If anything, they reveal more about conflicted national identity in South Africa and that country's relationship with nations north of its border. Indeed, one could go so far as to view Hugo's photos as manifestations of a strain of postapartheid exoticism. The trend is best typified by another white South African, Brett Bailey, a playwright and director whose mostly black theater troupe, Third World Bunfight, incorporates a miscellany of "ritual" African traditions into parodies of postcolonial African history meant to reject European cultural dominance in favor of a uniquely African theater. Like Hugo's photographs, however, Bailey's work veers into the territory of a postcolonial primitivism that seems to solidify rather than subvert stereotypes, and it's not surprising that his work hasn't drawn large audiences in black South African communities. According to Yale's *Theater* magazine, in Bailey's play *Big Dada* the

> grotesque climax comes in the stage-image of an enthroned, bull-horned [Idi] Amin gorging himself upon the flesh of the executed narrator, whose body is draped pietà-style across Amin's lap. As his hold on power evaporates under pressure from Tanzanian military action, Amin—microphone in one hand, bloodied knife in the other—serenades the audience with Paul Anka's version of "My Way" and dances his exit through the auditorium, evoking the historical Amin's escape to political asylum in Saudi Arabia.

Bailey seems resigned to his difficulties in attracting black audiences. "I don't feel like I'm orientating so much towards trying to reach the masses anymore," he says in *Theater*.

The trend has not gone uncriticized within South Africa, and looking at Hugo's photographs I couldn't help but recall the character Simeon Majara in *The Exploded View* (2004), a parodic novel by South African writer Ivan Vladislavic. Majara is an artist, and among his exhibitions is one on the Rwandan genocide (an event also explored by Pieter Hugo in an earlier collection of photographs). Of Majara's Rwanda installation, Vladislavic writes, "The opening of the show had been the usual ironic spectacle. One was always aware of the uncomfortable contrasts, the hacked limbs and bleached skulls, the guests with their glasses of wine, the price tags, the little green and red stickers."

In the novel, Majara recalls a series of installations he has made from several crates of "African" curios—masks and carved animals of unknown provenance—that were left over from a side job of his decorating an "African" themed restaurant. The insinuation is that South Africa, with its landscape of malls, shantytowns and faux-Tuscan suburban housing developments, is grasping for the same elusive "real" Africa as the cultural attaché of the French Embassy. Nobody, after all, wants to return from safari with nothing but a pair of Nikes from a mall in Sandton. But it's precisely this reduction of African identity to safari animals, masks and village life that Nollywood rejects.

"You know what's amazing?" a friend of Majara's asks him,

> It's like you're deconstructing the whole curio thing, which seems pretty obvious. But then you're saying, yelling actually: Look, I'm deconstructing this curio! So then it's like you're deconstructing the deconstruction thing, know what I mean? That's really amazing.

Majara's ambivalence is apparent, but he knows that such work will score him gallery shows in Sweden. Nollywood doesn't care what Sweden thinks.

Fifty years after the first wave of independence, Nollywood might end up killing off a lingering overestimation of independence's potential to effect lasting social change. Without being nihilistic, Nollywood videos address the experience of globalized, urbanized Africa as it actually exists. As literary critic Neil Lazarus, philosopher Achille Mbembe and others have written, the cultural outpouring of disillusionment over the failure of independence to fulfill its messianic potential has ended, replaced by less ideologically inflected explorations of African identity. What Nollywood movies portray is an Africa that doesn't celebrate "Africa" through Simeon Majara's curios. Instead Nollywood favors the expression of an African identity without either the old revolutionary tropes or the themes of nativism that, in negating the colonial denial of history, may have resulted in an equally homogenous and impoverished conception of African selfhood. Nollywood conveys the quotidian texture of Nigerian urban life, and it does not exclude as inauthentic the realities of consumerism, the multinational corporation or multiculturalism, which is why it might hold so much more appeal to Nigerians and people across the continent than auteurist Francophone African cinema. Nollywood's movies are grounded in the present and are popular because they meld timeless themes with contemporary desires. ■

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One of 248 billboards referring to the protagonist of *Atlas Shrugged* erected by Ted Turner in 1967

Garbage and Gravitas

by COREY ROBIN

St. Petersburg in revolt gave us Vladimir Nabokov, Isaiah Berlin and Ayn Rand. The first was a novelist, the second a philosopher. The third was neither but thought she was both. Many other people have thought so too. In 1998 readers responding to a Modern Library poll identified *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead* as the two greatest novels of the twentieth century—surpassing *Ulysses*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Invisible Man*. In 1991 a survey by the Library of Congress and the Book-of-the-Month Club found that with the exception of the Bible, no book has influenced more American readers than *Atlas Shrugged*.

One of those readers might well have been Farrah Fawcett. Not long before she died, the actress called Rand a "literary genius" whose refusal to make her art "like everyone else's" inspired Fawcett's experiments in painting and sculpture. The admiration, it seems, was mutual. Rand watched *Charlie's Angels* each week and, according to Fawcett, "saw something" in the show "that the critics didn't."

> She described the show as a "triumph of concept and casting." Ayn said that while *Angels* was uniquely American, it was also the exception to American television in that it was the only show to capture true "romanticism"—it intentionally depicted the world not as it was, but as it should be. Aaron Spelling was probably the only other person to see *Angels* that way, although he referred to it as "comfort television."

So taken was Rand with Fawcett that she hoped the actress (or if not her, Raquel Welch) would play the part of Dagny Taggart in a TV version of *Atlas Shrugged* on NBC. Unfortunately, network head Fred Silverman killed the project in 1978. "I'll always think of 'Dagny Taggart' as the best role I was supposed to play but never did," Fawcett said.

Rand's following in Hollywood has always been strong. Barbara Stanwyck and Veronica Lake fought to play the part of Dominique Francon in the movie version of *The Fountainhead*. Never to be outdone in that department, Joan Crawford threw a dinner party for Rand in which she dressed as Francon, wearing a streaming white gown dotted with aquamarine gemstones. More recently, the author of *The Virtue of Selfishness* and the statement "if civilization is to survive, it is the altruist morality that men have to reject" has found an unlikely pair of fans in the Hollywood humanitarian set. Rand "has a very interesting philosophy," says Angelina Jolie. "You re-evaluate your own life and what's important to you." *The Fountainhead* "is so dense and complex," marvels Brad Pitt, "it would have to be a six-hour movie." (The 1949 film version has a running time of 113 minutes, and it feels long.) Christina Ricci claims that *The Fountainhead* is her favorite book because it taught her that "you're not a bad person if you don't love everyone." Rob Lowe boasts that *Atlas Shrugged* is "a stupendous achievement, and I just adore it." And any boyfriend of Eva Mendes, the actress says, "has to be an Ayn Rand fan."

But Rand, at least according to her fiction, shouldn't have attracted any fans at all. The central plot device of her novels is the conflict between the creative individual and the hostile mass. The greater the individual's achievement, the greater the mass's resistance. As Howard Roark, *The Fountainhead*'s architect hero, puts it:

> The great creators—the thinkers, the artists, the scientists, the inventors—stood alone against the men of their time. Every great new thought was opposed. Every great new invention was denounced. The first motor was considered foolish. The airplane was considered impossible. The power loom was considered vicious. Anesthesia was considered sinful. But the men of unborrowed vision went ahead. They fought, they suffered and they paid.

Rand clearly thought of herself as one of these creators. In an interview with Mike Wallace she declared herself "the most creative thinker alive." That was in 1957, when Arendt, Quine, Sartre, Camus, Lukács, Adorno, Murdoch, Heidegger, Beauvoir, Rawls, Anscombe and Popper were all at work. It was also the year of the first performance of *Endgame* and the publication of *Pnin*, *Doctor Zhivago* and *The Cat in the Hat*. Two years later, Rand told Wallace that "the only philosopher who ever influenced me" was Aristotle. Otherwise, everything came "out of my own mind." She boasted to her friends and to her publisher at Random House, Bennet Cerf, that she was "challenging the cultural tradition of two and a half thousand years." She saw herself as she saw Roark, who said, "I inherit nothing. I stand

Ayn Rand and the World She Made
By Anne C. Heller.
Nan A. Talese. 567 pp. $35.

Goddess of the Market
Ayn Rand and the American Right.
By Jennifer Burns.
Oxford. 369 pp. $27.95.

Corey Robin teaches political science at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is the author of Fear: The History of a Political Idea *and is writing a book about conservatism and counterrevolution.*

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at the end of no tradition. I may, perhaps, stand at the beginning of one." But tens of thousands of fans were already standing with her. In 1945, just two years after its publication, *The Fountainhead* sold 100,000 copies. In 1957, the year *Atlas Shrugged* was published, it sat on the *New York Times* best-seller list for twenty-one weeks.

Rand may have been uneasy about the challenge her popularity posed to her worldview, for she spent much of her later life spinning tales about the chilly response she and her work had received. She falsely claimed that twelve publishers rejected *The Fountainhead* before it found a home. She styled herself the victim of a terrible but necessary isolation, claiming that "all achievement and progress has been accomplished, not just by men of ability and certainly not by groups of men, but by a struggle between man and mob." But how many lonely writers emerge from their study, having just written "The End" on the last page of their novel, to be greeted by a chorus of congratulations from a waiting circle of fans?

Had she been a more careful reader of her work, Rand might have seen this irony coming. However much she liked to pit the genius against the mass, her fiction always betrayed a secret communion between the two. Each of her two most famous novels gives its estranged hero an opportunity to defend himself in a lengthy speech before the untutored and the unlettered. Roark declaims before a jury of "the hardest faces" that includes "a truck driver, a bricklayer, an electrician, a gardener and three factory workers." John Galt takes to the airwaves in *Atlas Shrugged*, addressing millions of listeners for hours on end. In each instance, the hero is understood, his genius acclaimed, his alienation resolved. And that's because, as Galt explains, there are "no conflicts of interest among rational men"—which is just a Randian way of saying that every story has a happy ending.

The chief conflict in Rand's novels, then, is not between the individual and the masses. It is between the demigod-creator and all those unproductive elements of society—the intellectuals, bureaucrats and middlemen—that stand between him and the masses. Aesthetically, this makes for kitsch; politically, it bends toward fascism. Admittedly, the argument that there is a connection between fascism and kitsch has taken a beating over the years. Yet surely the example of Rand—and the publication of two new Rand biographies, Anne Heller's *Ayn Rand and the World She Made* and Jennifer Burns's *Goddess of the Market*—is suggestive enough to put the question of that connection back on the table.

She was born on February 2, three weeks after the failed revolution of 1905. Her parents were Jewish. They lived in St. Petersburg, a city long governed by hatred of the Jews. By 1914 its register of anti-Semitic restrictions ran to nearly 1,000 pages, including one statute limiting Jews to no more than 2 percent of the population. They named her Alissa Zinovievna Rosenbaum.

When she was 4 or 5 she asked her mother if she could have a blouse like the one her cousins wore. Her mother said no. She asked for a cup of tea like the one being served to the grown-ups. Again her mother said no. She wondered why she couldn't have what she wanted. Someday, she vowed, she would. In later life, Rand would make much of this experience. Heller does too: "The elaborate and controversial philosophical system she went on to create in her forties and fifties was, at its heart, an answer to this question and a memorialization of this project."

Once she was in Hollywood, Rand became the subject of her very own Hollywood story.

The story, as told, is pure Rand. There's the focus on a single incident as portent or precipitant of dramatic fate. There's the elevation of childhood commonplace to grand philosophy. What child, after all, hasn't bridled at being denied what she wants? Though Rand seems to have taken youthful selfishness to its outermost limits—as a child she disliked Robin Hood; as a teenager she watched her family nearly starve while she treated herself to the theater—her solipsism was neither so rare nor so precious as to warrant more than the usual amount of adolescent self-absorption. There is, finally, the inadvertent revelation that one's worldview constitutes little more than a case of arrested development. "It is not that chewing gum undermines metaphysics," Max Horkheimer once wrote about mass culture, "but that it *is* metaphysics—this is what must be made clear." Rand made it very, very clear.

But the anecdote suggests something additionally distinctive about Rand. Not her opinions or tastes, which were middlebrow and conventional. Rand claimed Victor Hugo as her primary inspiration in matters of fiction; Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* was another touchstone. She deemed Rachmaninoff superior to Bach, Mozart and Beethoven. She was offended by a reviewer's admittedly foolish comparison of *The Fountainhead* to *The Magic Mountain*. Mann, Rand thought, was the inferior author, as was Solzhenitsyn.

Nor was it her sense of self that set Rand apart from others. True, she tended toward the cartoonish and the grandiose. She told Nathaniel Branden, her much younger lover and disciple of many years, that he should desire her even if she were 80 and in a wheelchair. Her essays often quote Galt's speeches as if the character were a real person, a philosopher on the order of Plato or Kant. She claimed to have created herself with the help of no one, even though she was the lifelong beneficiary of social democratic largesse. She got a college education thanks to the Russian Revolution, which opened universities to women and Jews and, once the Bolsheviks had seized power, made tuition free. Subsidizing theater for the masses, the Bolsheviks also made it possible for Rand to see cheesy operettas on a weekly basis. After Rand's first play closed in New York City in April 1936, the Works Progress Administration took it on the road to theaters across the country, giving Rand a handsome income of $10 a performance throughout the late 1930s. Librarians at the New York Public Library assisted her with the research for *The Fountainhead*. Still, her narcissism was probably no greater—and certainly no less sustaining—than that of your run-of-the-mill struggling author.

No, what truly distinguished Rand was her ability to translate her sense of self into reality, to will her imagined identity into material fact. Not by being great but by persuading others, even shrewd biographers, that she was great. Heller, for example, repeatedly praises Rand's "original, razor sharp mind" and "lightning-quick logic," making one wonder if she's read any of Rand's work. She claims that Rand was able "to write more persuasively from a male point of view than any female writer since George Eliot." Does Heller really believe that Roark or Galt is more credible or persuasive than Lawrence Selden or Newland Archer? Or little James Ramsay, who seems to have acquired more psychic depth in his six years than any of Rand's protagonists, male or female, demonstrate throughout their entire lives?

Burns, an intellectual historian of the American right, is better informed and more judicious than Heller, a journalist who some-

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The Topkapi Palace was built by the Ottoman sultans in Istanbul (Constantinople), Turkey in the 15th century.

About Your Professor

Dr. Kenneth W. Harl is Professor of History at Tulane University, where he has taught since 1978, after receiving his Ph.D. in History from Yale University. He has led tours and worked on excavations in Turkey for many years. At Tulane, he has received the annual Student Award for Excellence in Teaching *nine times*. In 2001, he was the national winner of the Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teachers.

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times sounds like a foreign correspondent in need of a good interpreter (she identifies Trotsky as Lenin's "former sidekick" and says that Rand's characters are two-dimensional because they are meant to embody political ideas rather than emotional complexity, as if Dostoyevsky, Stendhal and a host of other writers, including the inferior Mann, hadn't managed to do both). But even Burns is occasionally seduced by Rand. She writes that Rand was "among the first to identify the modern state's often terrifying power and to make it an issue of popular concern," which is true only if one sets aside Montesquieu, Godwin, Constant, Tocqueville, Proudhon, Bakunin, Spencer, Kropotkin, Malatesta and Emma Goldman. She claims that Rand disliked the "messiness of the bohemian student protestors" of the '60s because she was "raised in the high European tradition." And what tradition is that? Operettas and Rachmaninoff? Melodrama and movies? She concludes that "what remains" of enduring value in Rand is her injunction to "be true to yourself," which is a notion I seem to recall figuring in a play about a Danish prince written several centuries before Rand's birth.

For Rand, the battle is between the producer and the moochers, and it must end in life or death.

To understand how Alissa Rosenbaum created Ayn Rand, we need to trace her itinerary not to pre-revolutionary Russia, which is the mistaken conceit of these biographies, but to her destination upon leaving Soviet Russia in 1926: Hollywood. For where else but in the dream factory could Rand have learned how to make dreams—about America, about capitalism and about herself?

Even before she was *in* Hollywood, Rand was *of* Hollywood. In 1925 alone, she saw 117 movies. It was in movies, Burns says, that Rand "glimpsed America"—and, we might add, developed her enduring sense of narrative form. Once there, she became the subject of her very own Hollywood story. She was discovered by Cecil B. DeMille, who saw her mooning about his studio looking for work. Intrigued by her intense gaze, he gave her a ride in his car and a job as an extra, which she quickly turned into a screenwriting gig. Within a few years her scripts were attracting attention from major players, prompting one newspaper to run a story with the headline Russian Girl Finds End of Rainbow in Hollywood.

Rand, of course, was not the only European who came to Hollywood during the interwar years. But unlike Fritz Lang, Hanns Eisler and other exiles among the palm trees and klieg lights, Rand did not escape to Hollywood; she went there willingly, eagerly. Billy Wilder arrived and shrugged his shoulders; Rand came on bended knee. Her mission was to learn, not refine or improve, the art of the dream factory: how to turn a good yarn into a suspenseful plot, an ordinary person into an outsize hero (or villain)—all the tricks of melodramatic narrative designed to persuade millions of viewers that life is really lived at a fever pitch. Most important, she learned how to perform that alchemy upon herself. Ayn Rand was Norma Desmond in reverse: she was small; the pictures got big.

When playing the part of the Philosopher, Rand liked to claim Aristotle as her tutor. "Never have so many"—uncharacteristically, she included herself here—"owed so much to one man." It's not clear how much of Aristotle's work Rand actually read: when she wasn't quoting Galt, she had a habit of attributing to the Greek philosopher statements and ideas that don't appear in any of his writings. One alleged Aristotelianism Rand was fond of citing did appear, complete with false attribution, in the autobiography of Albert Jay Nock, an influential libertarian from the New Deal era. In Rand's copy of Nock's memoir, Burns observes in an endnote, the passage is marked "with six vertical lines."

Rand also liked to cite Aristotle's law of identity or noncontradiction—the notion that everything is identical to itself, captured by the shorthand "A is A"—as the basis of her defense of selfishness, the free market and the limited state. That particular transport sent Rand's admirers into rapture and drove her critics, even the friendliest, to distraction. Several months before his death in 2002, Harvard philosopher Robert Nozick, the most analytically sophisticated of twentieth-century libertarians, said that "the use that's made by people in the Randian tradition of this principle of logic…is completely unjustified so far as I can see; it's illegitimate." In 1961 Sidney Hook wrote in the *New York Times*,

> Since his baptism in medieval times, Aristotle has served many strange purposes. None have been odder than this sacramental alliance, so to speak, of Aristotle with Adam Smith. The extraordinary virtues Miss Rand finds in the law that A is A suggests that she is unaware that logical principles by themselves can test only consistency. They cannot establish truth.… Swearing fidelity to Aristotle, Miss Rand claims to deduce not only matters of fact from logic but, with as little warrant, ethical rules and economic truths as well. As she understands them, the laws of logic license her in proclaiming that "existence exists," which is very much like saying that the law of gravitation is heavy and the formula of sugar sweet.

Whether or not Rand read Aristotle, it's clear that he made little impression upon her, particularly when it came to ethics. Aristotle had a distinctive approach to morality, quite out of keeping with modern sensibilities; and while Rand had some awareness of its distinctiveness, its substance seems to have been lost on her. Like a set of faux-leather classics on the living room shelf, Aristotle was there to impress the company—and, in Rand's case, distract from the real business at hand.

Unlike Kant, the emblematic modern who claimed that the rightness of our deeds is determined solely by reason, unsullied by need, desire or interest, Aristotle rooted his ethics in human nature, in the habits and practices, the dispositions and tendencies, that make us happy and enable our flourishing. And where Kant believed that morality consists of austere rules, imposing unconditional duties upon us and requiring our most strenuous sacrifice, Aristotle located the ethical life in the virtues. These are qualities or states, somewhere between reason and emotion but combining elements of both, that carry and convey us, by the gentlest and subtlest of means, to the outer hills of good conduct. Once there, we are inspired and equipped to scale these lower heights, whence we move onto the higher reaches. A person who acts virtuously develops a nature that wants and is able to act virtuously and that finds happiness in virtue. That coincidence of thought and feeling, reason and desire, is achieved over a lifetime of virtuous deeds. Virtue, in other words, is less a codex of rules, which must be observed in the face of the self's most violent opposition, than it is the food and fiber, the grease and gasoline, of a properly functioning soul.

If Kant is an athlete of the moral life, Aristotle is its virtuoso. Rand, by contrast, is a melodramatist of the moral life. Apprenticed in Hollywood rather than Athens, she has

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little patience for the quiet habituation in the virtues that Aristotelian ethics entails. She returns instead to her favored image of a heroic individual confronting a difficult path. Difficulty is never the result of confusion or ambiguity; Rand loathed "the cult of moral grayness," insisting that morality is first and always "a code of black and white." What makes the path treacherous—not for the hero, who seems to have been born fully outfitted for it, but for the rest of us—are the obstacles along the way. Doing the right thing brings hardship, penury and exile, while doing the wrong thing brings wealth, status and acclaim. Because he refuses to submit to architectural conventions, Roark winds up splitting rocks in a quarry. Peter Keating, Roark's doppelgänger, betrays everyone, including himself, and is the toast of the town. Ultimately, of course, the distribution of rewards and punishments will reverse: Roark is happy, Keating miserable. But ultimately is always and inevitably a long ways off.

In her essays, Rand seeks to apply to this imagery a superficial Aristotelian gloss. She, too, roots her ethics in human nature and refuses to draw a distinction between self-interest and the good, between ethical conduct and desire or need. But Rand's metric of good and evil, virtue and vice, is not happiness or flourishing. It is the stern and stark exigencies of life and death. As she writes in "The Objectivist Ethics":

> I quote from Galt's speech: "There is only one fundamental alternative in the universe: existence or nonexistence—and it pertains to a single class of entities: to living organisms. The existence of inanimate matter is unconditional, the existence of life is not: it depends on a specific course of action. Matter is indestructible, it changes its forms, but it cannot cease to exist. It is only a living organism that faces a constant alternative: the issue of life or death. Life is a process of self-sustaining and self-generated action. If an organism fails in that action, it dies; its chemical elements remain, but its life goes out of existence. It is only the concept of 'Life' that makes the concept of 'Value' possible. It is only to a living entity that things can be good or evil."

Rand's defenders like to claim that what Rand has in mind by "life" is not simply biological preservation but the good life of Aristotle's great-souled man, what Rand characterizes as "the survival of man *qua* man." And it's true that Rand isn't much taken with mere life or life for life's sake. That would be too pedestrian. But Rand's naturalism is far removed from Aristotle's. For him life is a given; for her it is a question, and that very question is what makes life, on its own, such an object and source of reflection.

What gives life value is the ever present possibility that it might (and one day will) end. Rand never speaks of life as a given or ground. It is a conditional, a choice we must make, not once but again and again. Death casts a pall, lending our days an urgency and weight they otherwise would lack. It demands wakefulness, an alertness to the fatefulness of each and every moment. "One must never act like a zombie," Rand enjoins. Death, in short, makes life dramatic. It makes our choices—not just the big ones but the little ones we make every day, every second—matter. In the Randian universe, it's high noon all the time. Far from being exhausting or enervating, such an existence, at least to Rand and her characters, is enlivening and exciting.

If this idea has any moral resonance, it will be heard not in the writings of Aristotle but in the drill march of fascism. The notion of life as a struggle against and unto death, of every moment laden with destruction, every choice pregnant with destiny, every action weighed upon by annihilation, its lethal pressure generating moral meaning—these are the watchwords of the European night. In his famous Berlin Sportpalast speech of February 1943, Goebbels declared, "Whatever serves it and its struggle for existence is *good* and must be *sustained* and *nurtured*. Whatever is injurious to it and its struggle for existence is *evil* and must be *removed* and *eliminated*." The "it" in question is the German nation, not the Randian individual. But if we strip the pronoun of its antecedent—and listen for the background hum of triumph and will, being and nonbeing, preservation and elimination—the similarities between the moral syntax of Randianism and of fascism become clear. Goodness is measured by life, life is a struggle against death and only our daily vigilance ensures that one does not prevail over the other.

Rand, no doubt, would object to the comparison. There is, after all, a difference between the individual and the collective. Rand thought the former an existential fundament, the latter—whether it took the form of a class, race or nation—a moral monstrosity. And where Goebbels talked of violence and war, Rand spoke of commerce and trade, production and economy. But fascism is hardly hostile to the heroic individual. That individual, moreover, often finds his deepest calling in economic activity. Far from demonstrating a divergence from fascism, Rand's economic writings register its impression indelibly.

Here is Hitler speaking to a group of industrialists in Düsseldorf in 1932:

> You maintain, gentlemen, that the German economy must be constructed on the basis of private property. Now such a conception of private property can only be maintained in practice if it in some way appears to have a logical foundation. This conception must derive its ethical justification from the insight that this is what nature dictates.

Rand, too, believes that capitalism is vulnerable to attack because it lacks "a philosophical base." If it is to survive, it must be rationally justified. We must "begin at the beginning," with nature itself. "In order to sustain its life, every living species has to follow a certain course of action required by its nature." Because reason is man's "means of survival," nature dictates that "men prosper or fail, survive or perish in proportion to the degree of their rationality." (Notice the slippage between success and failure and life and death.) Capitalism is the one system that acknowledges and incorporates this dictate of nature. "It is the basic, metaphysical fact of man's nature—the connection between his survival and his use of reason—that capitalism recognizes and protects." Like Hitler, Rand finds in nature, in man's struggle for survival, a "logical foundation" for capitalism.

Far from privileging the collective over the individual or subsuming the latter under the former, Hitler believed that it was the "strength and power of individual personality" that determined the economic (and cultural) fate of the race and nation. Here he is in 1933 addressing another group of industrialists:

> Everything positive, good and valuable that has been achieved in the world in the field of economics or culture is solely attributable to the importance of personality.... All the worldly goods we possess we owe to the struggle of the select few.

And here is Rand in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1967):

> The exceptional men, the innovators, the intellectual giants....It is the members of this exceptional minority who lift the whole of a free society to the level of their own achievements, while rising further and ever further.

If the first half of Hitler's economic views celebrates the romantic genius of the indi-

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vidual industrialist, the second spells out the inegalitarian implications of the first. Once we recognize "the outstanding achievements of individuals," Hitler says in Düsseldorf, we must conclude that "people are not of equal value or of equal importance." Private property "can be morally and ethically justified only if [we] admit that men's achievements are different." An understanding of nature fosters a respect for the heroic individual, which fosters an appreciation of inequality in its most vicious guise. "The creative and decomposing forces in a people always fight against one another."

Rand's appreciation of inequality is equally pungent. I quote from Galt's speech:

> The man at the top of the intellectual pyramid contributes the most to all those below him, but gets nothing except his material payment, receiving no intellectual bonus from others to add to the value of his time. The man at the bottom who, left to himself, would starve in his hopeless ineptitude, contributes nothing to those above him, but receives the bonus of all their brains. Such is the nature of the "competition" between the strong and the weak of the intellect. Such is the pattern of "exploitation" for which you have damned the strong.

Rand's path from nature to individualism to inequality also ends in a world divided between "the creative and decomposing forces." In every society, says Roark, there is a "creator" and a parasitic "second-hander," each with its own nature and code. The first "allows man to survive." The second is "incapable of survival." One produces life, the other induces death. In *Atlas Shrugged* the battle is between the producer and the "looters" and "moochers." It too must end in life or death.

It should come as no surprise to find Rand in such company, for she and the Nazis share a patrimony in the vulgar Nietzscheanism that has stalked the radical right, whether in its libertarian or fascist variants, since the early part of the twentieth century. As Heller and especially Burns show, Nietzsche exerted an early grip on Rand that never really loosened. Her cousin teased Rand that Nietzsche "beat you to all your ideas." When Rand arrived in the United States, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was the first book in English she bought. With Nietzsche on her mind, she was inspired to write in her journals that "the secret of life" is, "you must be nothing but will. Know what you want and do it. Know what you are doing and why you are doing it, every minute of the day. All will and all control. Send everything else to hell!" Her entries frequently include phrases like "Nietzsche and I think" and "as Nietzsche said."

Rand was much taken with the idea of the violent criminal as moral hero, a Nietzschean transvaluator of all values; according to Burns, she "found criminality an irresistible metaphor for individualism." A literary Leopold and Loeb, she plotted out a novella based on the actual case of a murderer who strangled a 12-year-old girl. The murderer, said Rand, "is born with a wonderful, free, light consciousness—resulting from the absolute lack of social instinct or herd feeling. He does not understand, *because he has no organ for understanding*, the necessity, meaning or importance of other people." That is not a bad description of Nietzsche's master class in *The Genealogy of Morals*.

Though Rand's defenders claim she later abandoned her infatuation with Nietzsche, Burns does an excellent job of demonstrating its persistence. There's the figure of Roark himself: "As she jotted down notes on Roark's personality," writes Burns, "she told herself, 'See Nietzsche about laughter.' The book's famous first line indicates the centrality of this connection: 'Howard Roark laughed.'" And then there's *Atlas Shrugged*, which Ludwig von Mises, one of the presiding eminences of neoclassical economics, praised thus:

> You have the courage to tell the masses what no politician told them: you are inferior and all the improvements in your conditions which you simply take for granted you owe to the effort of men who are better than you.

But Nietzsche's influence saturated Rand's writing in a deeper way, one emblematic of the overall trajectory of the conservative right since its birth in the crucible of the French Revolution. Rand was a lifelong atheist with a special animus for Christianity, which she called the "best kindergarten of communism possible." Far from representing a heretical tendency within conservatism, Rand's statement channels a tradition of right-wing suspicion about the insidious effects of religion, particularly Christianity, on the modern world. Where many conservatives since 1789 have rallied to Christianity and religion as an antidote to the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the more farsighted among them have seen religion, or at least some aspect of it, as the adjutant of revolution.

Joseph de Maistre, the most visionary of France's early counterrevolutionaries, was one of the first to speak of this. An arch-Catholic, he traced the French Revolution to the acrid solvents of the Reformation. With its celebration of "private interpretation" of the Scriptures, Protestantism paved the way for century upon century of regicide and revolt originating in the lower classes.

> It is from the shadow of a cloister that there emerges one of mankind's very greatest scourges. Luther appears; Calvin follows him. The Peasants' Revolt; the Thirty Years' War; the civil war in France…the murders of Henry II, Henry IV, Mary Stuart, and Charles I; and finally, in our day, from the same source, the French Revolution.

Nietzsche, the child of a Lutheran pastor, radicalized this argument, painting all of Christianity—indeed all of Western religion, going back to Judaism—as a slave morality, the psychic revolt of the lower orders against their betters. Before there was religion or even morality, there was the sense and sensibility of the master class. The master looked upon his body—its strength and beauty, its demonstrated excellence and reserves of power—and saw and said that it was good. As an afterthought he looked upon the slave, and saw and said that it was bad. The slave never looked upon himself: he was consumed by envy of and resentment toward his master. Too weak to act upon his rage and take revenge, he launched a quiet but lethal revolt of the mind. He called all the master's attributes—power, indifference to suffering, thoughtless cruelty—evil. He spoke of his own attributes—meekness, humility, forbearance—as good. He devised a religion that made selfishness and self-concern a sin, and compassion and concern for others the path to salvation. He envisioned a universal brotherhood of believers, equal before God, and damned the master's order of unevenly distributed excellence. The modern residue of that slave revolt, Nietzsche makes clear, is found not in Christianity, or even religion, but in the nineteenth-century movements for democracy and socialism:

> Another Christian concept, no less crazy, has passed even more deeply into the tissue of modernity: the concept of the "equality of souls before God." This concept furnishes the prototype of all theories of equal rights: mankind was first taught to stammer the proposition of equality in a religious context, and only later was it made into morality: no wonder that man ended by taking it seriously, taking it

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practically!—that is to say, politically, democratically, socialistically.

When Rand inveighs against Christianity as the forebear of socialism, when she rails against altruism and sacrifice as inversions of the true hierarchy of values, she is cultivating the strain within conservatism that sees religion as not a remedy to but a helpmate of the left. And when she looks, however ineptly, to Aristotle for an alternative morality, she is recapitulating Nietzsche's journey back to antiquity, where he hoped to find a master-class morality untainted by the egalitarian values of the lower orders.

Though Rand's antireligious defense of capitalism might seem out of place in today's political firmament, we would do well to recall the recent revival of interest in her books. More than 800,000 copies of her novels were sold in 2008 alone; as Burns rightly notes, "Rand is a more active presence in American culture now than she was during her lifetime." Indeed, Rand is regularly cited as a formative influence upon an entire new generation of Republican leaders; Burns calls her "the ultimate gateway drug to life on the right." Whether or not she is invoked by name, Rand's presence is palpable in the concern, heard increasingly on the right, that there is something sinister afoot in the institutions and teachings of Christianity.

> I beg you, look for the words "social justice" or "economic justice" on your church website. If you find it, run as fast as you can. Social justice and economic justice, they are code words. Now, am I advising people to leave their church? Yes.

That was Glenn Beck on his March 2 radio show, taking a stand against, well, pretty much every church in the Christian faith: Catholic, Episcopalian, Methodist, Baptist—even his very own Church of Latter-day Saints.

On her own, Rand is of little significance. It is only her resonance in American culture—and the unsavory associations her resonance evokes—that makes her of any interest. She's not unlike the "second-hander" described by Roark: "Their reality is not within them, but somewhere in that space which divides one human body from another. Not an entity, but a relation.... The second-hander acts, but the source of his actions is scattered in every other living person." For once, it seems, he knew whence he spoke.

But after all the Nietzsche is said and Aristotle is done, we're still left with a puzzle about Rand: how could such a mediocrity, not just a second-hander but a second-rater, exert such a continuing influence on the culture at large?

We possess an entire literature, from Melville to Mamet, devoted to the con man and the hustler, and it's tempting to see Rand as one of the many fakes and frauds who periodically light up the American landscape. But that temptation should be resisted. Rand represents something different, more unsettling. The con man is a liar who can ascertain the truth of things, often better than the rest of us. He has to: if he is going to fleece his mark, he has to know who the mark is and who the mark would like to be. Working in that netherworld between fact and fantasy, the con man can gild the lily only if he sees the lily for what it is. But Rand had no desire to gild anything. The gilded lily was reality. What was there to add? She even sported a lapel pin to make the point: made of gold and fashioned in the shape of a dollar sign, it was bling of the most literal sort.

Since the nineteenth century, it has been the task of the left to hold up to liberal civilization a mirror of its highest values and to say, "You do not look like this." You claim to believe in the rights of man, but it is only the rights of property you uphold. You claim to stand for freedom, but it is only the freedom of the strong to dominate the weak. If you wish to live up to your principles, you must give way to their demiurge. Allow the dispossessed to assume power, and the ideal will be made real, the metaphor will be made material.

Rand believed that this meeting of heaven and earth could be arranged by other means. Rather than remake the world in the image of paradise, she looked for paradise in an image of the world. Political transformation wasn't necessary. Transubstantiation was enough. Say a few words, wave your hands and the ideal is real, the metaphor material. An idealist of the most primitive sort, Rand took a century of socialist dichotomies and flattened them. Small wonder so many have accused her of intolerance: when heaven and earth are pressed so closely together, where is there room for dissent?

Far from needing explanation, Rand's success explains itself. Rand worked in that quintessential American proving ground—alongside the likes of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and Glenn Beck—where garbage achieves gravitas and bullshit gets blessed. There she learned that dreams don't come true. They *are* true. Turn your metaphysics into chewing gum, and your chewing gum is metaphysics. A is A. ■

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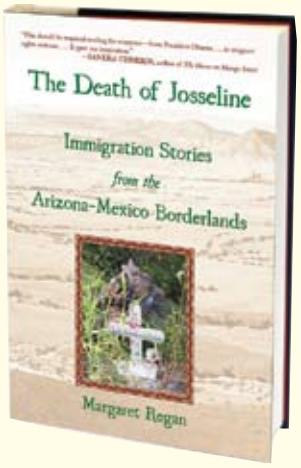

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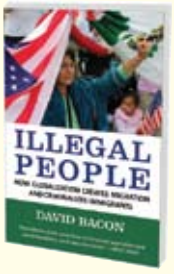

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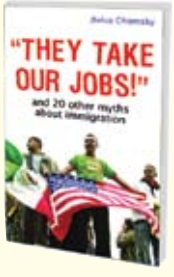

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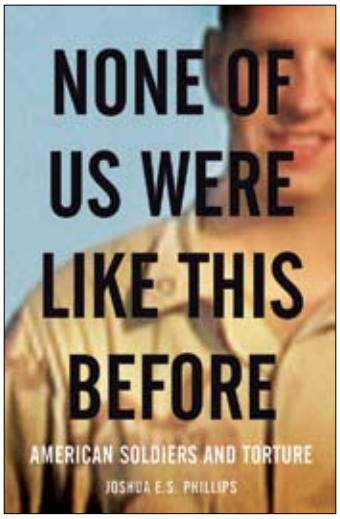

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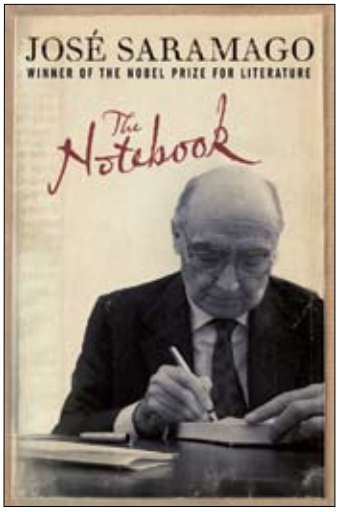

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—"mu" fifty-third part—

Some new Atlantis known as Lower
Ninth we took leave of next, half the
turtle's back away. Whole bodies
we saw floating, not only heads…
Endless letting go, endless looking
else-
where, endless turning out to be
otherwise… Woods all around where
we came to next. We'd been
eating wind, we'd been drinking
wind,
rumoring someone looked at God eye
to eye… In what seemed a dream but
we saw wasn't we saw dirt sliding.
We were back and all the buildings
were gone. What were cliffs to us
we
wondered, blown dust of Bandiagara,
what
the eroding precipice we saw… Ground
acorns ground our teeth now. All but
all gums, we were where the Alone
lived, came to a clearing lit by light
so
bright we staggered, Nub it was we knew
we were still in… The mountain of
the night a mound of nothing, Toulali's
burr
what balm there was. Toulali's burr what
balm, remote though it was, lifetimes
behind us now… Voice laryngitic, lost
and lost again, blown grit rubbed it
away…
Someone had said something came to
mind. Someone had sung something, what
its words were no one could say. Sang
it
bittersweet, more brusque than bitter,
song's
cloth endowment stripped… Choric strain,
repeatedly slipped entablature. Given…
Given

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endlessly again… No telling when but
intent on telling, no telling what. Wished
we
were home
again

•

Refugees was a word we'd heard,
raw talk of soul insistent, adamant,
the nonsong we sang or the song
we nonsang, a word we'd heard we
heard
was us… Wept in our sleep, again
one with what would never again be
there, raw talk rummaged our book,
the
backs of our hands written on with
cornmeal, the awaited ones reluctant
again…
The city of sad children's outskirts we
were in, woods notwithstanding, woods
nonetheless, bright light the light we
saw
as we were jolted, raw talk spiraling
away…
We were there and somewhere else no
matter where we were, everywhere more
than where we were… Where the Alone
lived we donned abalone-shell ornaments,
light's clarity conceded, night yet to relent,
Toulali
smoldered on, semisang, semispoke, wrestled
with his tongue it seemed… We trudged in place,
barely lifted our feet, backbeat hallowing
every step we took, moved us albeit we
stayed
put. We were where we were, somewhere
else no matter where, evacuees a word we'd
heard…
Stutter step, stuck shuffle, dancelike, Toulali's
croon enticed us, toyed with us, ground gone
under
where we
stood

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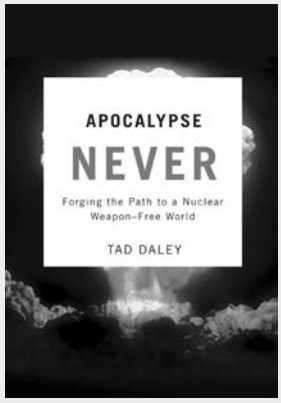

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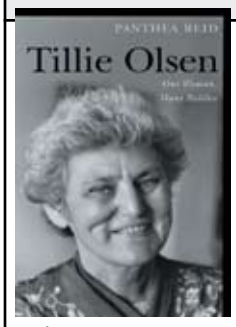

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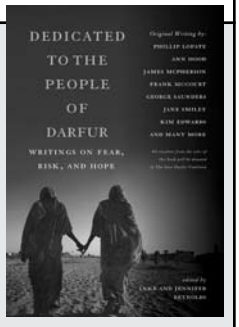

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Pictures of Barack Obama, Harold Washington, Malcolm X and the Rev. Jesse Jackson (clockwise from left) hanging on the wall of a Chicago bar (2008)

Stories and Legends

by THOMAS J. SUGRUE

"Rosa sat so Martin could walk/ Martin walked so Obama could run/ Obama is running so our children can fly!" Circulated widely during the last weeks of the 2008 presidential election, this short piece of verse encapsulates the relationship of Barack Obama to collective memories of the civil rights movement. It is a story of debt: Obama owes his success to the past generation of civil rights protesters. It is a story of redemption: Obama's political career realizes their dream that skin color be no longer a bar to ambition. And it is a story of hope and promise: Obama's victory will open up extraordinary opportunities to the next generation. The poem is powerful because it unself-consciously provides Obama with a political genealogy in the most important social movement of the twentieth century and offers a teleological view of America on an inexorable path of progress.

Obama himself emphasized his place in the unfolding history of civil rights at key moments during his long presidential campaign, most notably in one of the more extraordinary speeches of his career, in Selma, Alabama, on March 4, 2007, before a mostly black audience at an event commemorating the city's voting rights march of 1965. Joining Obama were Congressman John Lewis; C.T. Vivian, a minister and close aide to the Reverend King; and Artur Davis, a young, black Harvard Law graduate and a Democratic rising star who hoped to be one of the first African-Americans elected to statewide office in Alabama since Reconstruction.

It was one of Obama's most moving speeches, a virtuosic performance, delivered in the sonorous tones of someone who had learned the art of rhetoric from the pulpit of the black church. Obama seemed to be channeling King himself in his cadence, his mix of exhortation and analysis and his easy use of biblical imagery. The speech culminated in an extended allusion to the book of Exodus. "So I just want to talk a little about Moses and Aaron and Joshua, because we are in the presence today of a lot of Moseses. We're in the presence today of giants whose shoulders we stand on, people who battled, not just on behalf of African-Americans but on behalf of all of America; that battled for America's soul, that shed blood.... Like Moses, they challenged Pharaoh, the princes, powers who said that some are atop and others are at the bottom, and that's how it's always going to be." He traced his own lineage to their struggle. "It is because they marched that I got the kind of education I got, a law degree, a seat in the Illinois Senate and ultimately in the United States Senate." Ultimately the story was one of liberation from bondage. "The previous generation, the Moses Generation, pointed the way. They took us 90 percent of the way there. We still got that 10 percent in order to cross over to the other side." Obama simultaneously paid respect to the elders of the civil rights struggle, situated his career as their legacy and offered a story of redemption. For those Americans—especially white Americans—who believed that the struggle for racial equality was nearly finished, these words were a balm.

If the struggle was 90 percent complete, what remained to be done? Raising his voice, Obama exhorted the "Joshua Generation" to remember the freedom struggle of the 1960s, to exhibit "the sense of moral clarity and purpose" of those who came before them and, in a riff familiar to black churchgoers but surprising to most white commentators, called for parental responsibility, criticizing "daddies not acting like daddies" and exhorting a fictional, feckless "cousin Pookie" to "get off the couch and register some folks and go to the polls." At the core of the speech was Obama's vision of the civil rights struggle as one of individual initiative and self-transformation. "If you want to change the world," Obama solemnly intoned, "the change has to happen with you first, and that is something that the greatest and most honorable of generations has taught us." He reinforced the profoundly individualistic understanding of the freedom struggle and its challenge to hearts and minds.

The metaphor of Moses and Joshua, the freedom fighter and the nation builder, offered a powerful framework for Obama's campaign, one that rooted the rootless Hawaiian in the history of the Southern freedom struggle, but with the past as a prologue to a more glorious future. It was Obama's shorthand explanation of the long sweep of black politics from the legislative gains of the mid-1960s to the early twenty-first century. Obama positioned himself as the heir to King and the civil rights movement, but also as part of a vanguard of black politicians who jettisoned a now untimely and divisive sense of racial grievance and embraced mainstream, "middle-class" values (which many commentators interpreted as "white"), rather than appealing to race consciousness. Moses led the Chosen People from the bondage of racial oppression; Joshua would lead them into a multiracial Canaan, where Egyptian and Jew, white and black, pharaohs and prophets would live side by side. Obama signaled the major theme of his campaign: nation building

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through the restoration of a common national purpose that Americans could achieve by transcending the old divisions of race, ethnicity, religion and party. And Obama provided a wide range of commentators with a compelling, but ultimately problematic, framework for discussing the past fifty years of racial politics, one that emphasizes discontinuity, generational division and novelty, suggesting that the United States has decisively entered a "post–civil rights era."

The Moses/Joshua metaphor, for all of its power, does not do justice to Obama's relationship to America's long, unfinished struggle for racial equality. The relation between Obama and civil rights history is at once more powerful and more oblique than the conventional narrative would lead us to believe. To understand Obama's place in modern American history requires going beyond King and Parks, Moses and Joshua, to the real Obama and to the relationship of history, memory, biography and national politics. To understand Obama's relationship to America's racial past—and to make sense of how he places himself in it, including what he left in and what he edited out—requires situating him in the context of the contested cultural, intellectual and political milieu of the period from the 1960s to the present. The history of civil rights in modern America is one of remembering and forgetting, of inclusion and exclusion.

Barack Obama was, by his own telling, an unlikely Joshua. Born in Hawaii in 1961, he was both too young and too distant from the heart of the black freedom struggle to have direct memories of it. Hawaii occupied a distinctive place in America's racial history: it was a polyglot, polychromatic part of the far-flung American empire, a place with a troubled history of conquest and unfree labor. By World War II, the island territory had become "the first strange place," where the very mixing of Asians, Americans of European descent, native islanders and African-Americans was so transgressive that the military feared its becoming a seedbed of "mongrelization." It is no surprise that Barack Obama Sr., a Kenyan national, and Stanley Ann Dunham, a Kansan of European descent, whose courtship and marriage would have been illegal in many states and offensive in most, found Hawaii a propitious place to begin their short-lived interracial relationship in 1959.

If Obama was, in part, the product of a hybrid racial culture in Hawaii, he also came of age in the 1970s, at a moment when notions of race, ethnicity and national identity were in profound flux throughout the United States. It was the beginning of America's age of multiculturalism, when young blacks looked back to a mythical pan-African past and "white ethnics" began celebrating their origins after generations of being uprooted from their ancestral homes and being encouraged to jettison their foreign ways. What had been stigmatized—whether skin color or ethnic heritage—became a source of self-esteem. In one of the most influential journeys of self-discovery in the '70s, Alex Haley took readers and television viewers in search of his own, mostly fictional African "roots." Haley's lesson, that to know your history was to know your authentic self, reflected an increasingly influential current in mainstream American education and culture in the 1970s.

As a high school student at Honolulu's Punahou School, Obama embarked on his own quest for authenticity. Even if he was still uncertain and uncomfortable about his African roots, he did not embrace his European-American heritage. Instead, he gravitated toward blackness, growing his hair into an Afro, emulating black basketball stars and seeking out the company of self-identified black Hawaiians. His search for self-understanding drew him inexorably toward the continental United States, to

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African America and to Harlem, the souls of black folks, and the civil rights and black power movements that played out a world away from his childhood homes.

Obama's adolescent search for his roots led him first to the canonical works of Richard Wright, James Baldwin, W.E.B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes. But their accounts of black life did not speak to Obama's already irrepressible optimism or his experience in Hawaii. "In every page of every book," Obama wrote in his 1995 memoir, *Dreams From My Father*, "in Bigger Thomas and invisible men, I kept finding the same anguish, the same doubt; a self-contempt that neither irony nor intellect seemed able to deflect." He found them "exhausted, bitter men, the devil at their heels." But Obama had an epiphany when he read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, written with Alex Haley. As Obama recalled, Malcolm's "repeated acts of self-creation spoke to me." It was telling that a young man who had spent his childhood inhabiting an in-between world of race and ethnicity found himself alienated from those writers who struggled with what Du Bois memorably called their "twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Instead, Obama gravitated toward a mixed-race man—Malcolm was nicknamed Detroit Red because of his skin and hair color—who rejected his white roots, banished the thought of twoness and had become an icon of assertive black masculinity and racial pride.

Obama's dalliance with Malcolm sparked his interest in black radicalism. In high school he befriended Frank Marshall Davis, a longtime black radical who had followed a common trajectory from the interracial leftism of the postwar years to a more militant race-conscious politics. A poet, journalist and sometime labor organizer, Davis had an unkempt, graying Afro, his own expression of blackness. Obama was something of a Davis protégé: the two spent hours together drinking and discussing black life and politics. In one memorable conversation, Davis told Obama that "black people have a reason to hate. That's just the way it is." Davis's sentiments put him in the company of those black militants who eschewed nonviolence and attempted to channel black pride and racial anger into oppositional politics. But there was not much of a black power movement left by the time Obama was in high school, and even less of one when he attended college. Black power had never been as powerful or popular as its adherents and the news media had asserted, and by the late 1970s many of its most vocal proponents had burned out, hardened by sectarian struggle and embittered by police harassment.

Even if black power was institutionally weak, it lived on in a mix of racial pride and grievance and a celebration of resistance and African culture, exemplified in the late-night "bull sessions" that Obama joined with fellow black students at Occidental College in California from 1979 to 1981 and, even more, on the streets and in the shops of Harlem, which he got to know intimately over the next fours years, first as a student at Columbia University and then as a New York City resident. He spent long days "walking from one end of Manhattan to the other," visiting Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church and shooting hoops at neighborhood basketball courts. New York in the early '80s was America's most heterogeneous city, a place marked by its own peculiar history of racial resentments; it was home to the country's largest concentration of black nationalists, querulous and splintered over arcane debates from the late 1960s, and who found common cause only in their belief in the irreducible racism of white America and their outrage against police repression.

If Obama flirted with black nationalism, his time as a community organizer in Chicago in the mid-1980s introduced him to another current of the long black freedom struggle, one every bit as militant as black nationalism and built on a black community consciousness, even as its practitioners eschewed the goal of racial separatism. "What really inspired me," Obama recalled in a 2007 interview about his early career, "was the civil rights movement. And if you asked me who my role model was at that time, it would probably be Bob Moses, the famous SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] organizer.… Those were the folks I was really inspired by—the John Lewises, the Bob Moseses, the Fannie Lou Hamers, the Ella Bakers." Obama's choice of these activists—along with his use of the past tense—offers a revealing glimpse into his racial politics and how they shifted over time.

The four were among the most militant in the nonviolent freedom movement—none of them were consensus builders. Baker and Moses, in particular, provided interesting analogies for Obama. Both launched their careers in the North. Baker was a left-leaning activist in Harlem in the 1930s, swept into the Popular Front alliance of civil rights activists and Communists. Moses, a native New Yorker and schoolteacher, led SNCC's mostly off-camera organizing efforts in the Mississippi Delta. Both—like Obama, working on Chicago's South Side—viewed community organizing as a discipline, not simply as a tactic (even if they came from different, but related, organizing traditions). Both Baker and Moses were among the most revered activists of their generations. But unlike Obama, who quickly learned the power of his own personal narrative and wove it into his speeches, his writing and his interviews, both were intensely private, preferring to remain in the background, doing the hard, everyday work of organizing but seldom serving as spokesmen for the movement and leaving their personal lives hidden from even their closest associates. Obama was an activist-politician whose sensibilities and style emerged in the confessional culture of the post-1960s era; Baker and Moses, by contrast, exhibited a reticence born of the notion that, ultimately, their personal stories did not matter.

In the 1960s, Moses, Baker, Hamer and Lewis had combined elements of the prophetic and the disruptive in their work. Each was committed to the power of the ballot box, though only Lewis and Hamer aspired to political office. But grassroots organizing and protest did not provide skills that translated easily into the art of electoral politics and lawmaking. Hamer quixotically ran for Congress but faced insuperable obstacles to her election in the barely post–Voting Rights Act South. And by the late 1960s, she had joined the welfare rights movement, advocating for the expansion of citizenship rights for impoverished women and calling for a destigmatization of welfare. She was ultimately more prophet than politician. Neither Moses nor Baker, like most grassroots activists, aspired to electoral politics and continued their work behind the scenes. Lewis, by contrast, ultimately ran a successful campaign for Congress from an overwhelmingly black Congressional district in Georgia, using his position less to legislate than to serve as a voice of conscience and a national advocate for racial equality.

By the time Obama moved to the Windy City in the summer of 1985, he was both a voracious reader of civil rights and black history and a keen observer of black social movements, and had arrived at a sophisticated understanding of the syncretism that defined black politics. In an essay from 1988, Obama argued that "from W.E.B. Du Bois to Booker T. Washington to Marcus Garvey to Malcolm X to Martin Luther King, this internal debate

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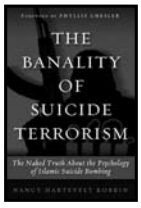
has raged between integration and nationalism, between accommodation and militancy, between sit-down strikes and boardroom negotiations. The lines between these strategies have never been simply drawn, and the most successful black leadership has recognized the need to bridge these seemingly divergent approaches." Obama perceived the fundamental pragmatism that animated the long black freedom struggle: few activists were ideologically pure. They debated, revised and reformulated their political positions, rejecting strategies that did not seem to be working, experimenting with new ones and forging alliances that, to many outside observers who expected ideological consistency, seemed unlikely. Civil rights and black power were fundamentally intertwined in ways that most commentators—trapped in a binary framework that pitted the two against each other as irreconcilable—could not grasp.

Obama's description of the synergies between integration and nationalism, between Martin and Malcolm, was an apt description of black politics in the post-'60s years. Over Obama's lifetime, the color of American politics had changed dramatically. In 1965 only 193 blacks held elected office nationwide; just twenty years later, when Obama began working as a community activist and political organizer in Chicago, that figure had risen to 6,016. But black politics defied simple characterization. Some politicians were the heirs of black power, particularly those with safe seats in overwhelmingly black districts, who did not depend on white electoral support and who could use explicit race-based appeals to rouse their supporters. They had incentives to adopt a politics of race pride and consciousness. In the handful of majority-black cities (notably Newark, Gary, Washington and Detroit), black candidates often donned dashikis, engaged in theatrical denunciations of whites and described their candidacies in terms of black power, even though many real black power advocates lacked the patience, the political skills and the willingness to be "co-opted" by the two mainstream parties necessary to win elected office. Conversely, many ostensible militants made their peace with white business leaders and civic elites.

But black militancy was only one thread of post-'60s black politics, even if, because of its rhetoric, its proponents dominated the airwaves. From the 1960s onward, many of the most influential and effective black politicians were—by disposition and necessity—coalition builders. Mostly forgotten in political accounts of the civil rights era was Edward Brooke, a black Massachusetts Republican, who won election to the US Senate in 1966, at a moment of extraordinary racial tension in a 97 percent white state. That summer, Stokely Carmichael uttered the famous words "black power"; welfare rights activists demonstrated at the Massachusetts Statehouse; and antibusing activists Pixie Palladino and Louise Day Hicks won widespread support in Boston's Irish and Italian neighborhoods. Yet Brooke distanced himself from Massachusetts's racially polarized politics; most notably, he distanced himself from Carmichael and convinced suburban and small-town whites that he was a good-government, fiscally responsible candidate. As a result, he won by a comfortable margin, picking up many Democratic voters, even if he lost big among Boston's bitter blue-collar whites, whose votes he did not need because of the breadth of his coalition. As a Republican, Brooke was an outlier among black politicians, but many of them shared his challenge: how to win office in majority-white jurisdictions.

In the three decades after Brooke's election, sixty-seven cities with populations over 50,000 elected black mayors, nearly all of them members of the Democratic Party. Most of those cities were majority white. Many black leaders—even those with origins in the



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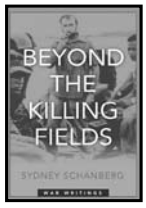

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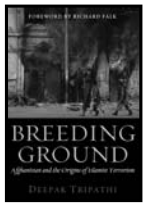

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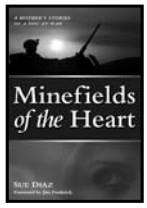

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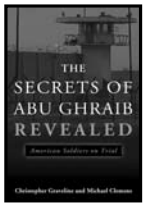

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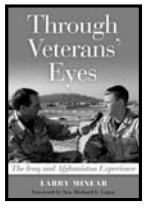

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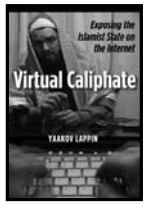

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controversial community control and black power movements of the 1960s—forged coalitions across racial lines, although an admixture of racism and antiliberalism kept most of them from winning a white majority. In 1973 Tom Bradley won election as mayor of Los Angeles, a city with a relatively small black population (only 17.7 percent of the city's inhabitants) and still struggling with the divisive legacy of the 1965 Watts riot. In 1983 Wilson Goode, who had started his career as a community organizer with funds from the War on Poverty, was elected mayor of Philadelphia, a majority-white city, with the support of almost a quarter of white voters. Blacks won elected office, with white support, in many other majority-white cities, among them New Haven and Denver.

Black electoral gains (outside the majority-minority districts created after the Voting Rights Act of 1965) were slower to come in the South, but there, too, black politicians who aspired to statewide office forged successful interracial electoral coalitions. In 1983 voters in Charlotte, North Carolina, a majority-white city and bastion of the New New South, a place with its own deep divisions over civil rights and school desegregation, put moderate black businessman Harvey Gantt into the mayor's office. In an intensely polarized race for the US Senate in 1990, Gantt barely lost to incumbent Republican Jesse Helms, who rallied his supporters by playing to fears of racial quotas and white job loss. Virginia, once capital of the Confederacy, elected a black Democratic governor, Douglas Wilder, in 1989. Both of these candidates shifted to the right of their black constituents, positioning themselves as probusiness and socially moderate, assuming correctly that they would lose little black support while gaining white support. Wilder crossed the racial divide, and Gantt nearly did, both in states with long histories of racial animosity.

On the national level, too, the gap between Moses and Joshua was blurry. African-American women, many of them coalition builders, played a decisive role in reconfiguring liberal politics. Shirley Chisholm, elected to Congress from Brooklyn in 1968, became the first African-American Democratic candidate for president. In 1976 Texas Congresswoman Barbara Jordan delivered a celebrated keynote address nominating Jimmy Carter (whose centrist presidential candidacy, it should be noted, was ardently supported by alleged race-baiters, such as Coleman Young). Chisholm and Jordan did not get very far nationally, not because they were politicians steeped in the race-conscious identity politics of the civil rights years but because the majority of white voters were unwilling to cross the racial and gender divide.

No one better embodied the syncretic nature of black electoral politics than Harold Washington, a candidate who came up through the Chicago machine but then broke from it to run as a reform candidate and get elected as the city's first black mayor in 1983, less than two years before Obama started his Chicago organizing career. Washington fashioned a dual strategy for victory: he appealed to the racial pride and grievances of his black constituents while reaching out to an interracial constituency. He came to office amid a black urban backlash against the Reagan administration, whose economic policies had worsened inner-city economies, whose "New Federalism" led to a steady reduction in urban spending and whose challenges to affirmative action and welfare reinforced racial stereotypes. Washington swept to victory in large part because of the huge turnout among his African-American base—after a massive voter registration campaign, 85 percent of Chicago's eligible black voters cast their ballots.

> Obama echoed analysts who saw the black ascent to urban power as a 'hollow prize.'

But Washington was not just the "black candidate" or the "black mayor," even if, in racially polarized Chicago, black voters overwhelmingly supported him and the vast majority of white voters opposed his candidacy vehemently. More than 80 percent of Chicago's whites—who were preponderantly Democrats—broke party ranks and supported Republican Bernard Epton, bringing him within thousands of votes of victory in 1983. But Washington drew support from Chicago's rapidly growing Latino population and from white liberals who provided him with campaign funds and enough votes to put him over the top.

As mayor, Washington rewarded his supporters, especially African-Americans, with positions in his administration, even though Chicago's infamous "council wars," led by powerful, race-baiting alderman "Fast Eddie" Vrdolyak, held up many mayoral appointments. But at the same time Washington surrounded himself with an interracial team of advisers, including two figures who would later be members of Obama's inner circle: David Axelrod and Valerie Jarrett. Washington also made peace with leading white politicians (endorsing Richard M. Daley, his onetime opponent and son of the longtime machine leader, and Aurelia Pucinski, daughter of powerful Congressman and white ethnic spokesman Roman Pucinski, in their bids for Cook County offices). And he worked to overcome the suspicion of Chicago's business elite by cutting the city's payroll, reducing the city's debt and restoring its favorable credit rating. As a consequence, Chicago's black nationalists—many of whom had enthusiastically supported his candidacy—charged him with "accommodationism." Washington's ability to build coalitions while simultaneously appealing to his black base was the key to his victory, just as it would be for Obama a quarter-century later.

The political potency of black consciousness left a deep impression on Obama. He observed that Chicago's blacks talked about the mayor "with a familiarity and affection normally reserved for a relative." It was Harold, not Mayor Washington (just as it had been Martin, Malcolm, Huey and Jesse—and, twenty years later, in barbershops, churches and the black blogosphere, it would be Barack). Black loyalty to Washington was, in part, a matter of group pride, but also a matter of self-interest. Political power brought real economic benefits to urban blacks. By the 1960s, the public sector had become an important avenue of upward mobility for black workers, even if they had been confined mostly to unskilled, bottom-of-the-rung jobs like sanitation work. In many cities, including Chicago, municipal jobs were unionized and secure, with generous health and pension benefits, and they provided a compelling alternative to rapidly disappearing manufacturing work. But black workers were not satisfied with entry-level, manual labor. Empowered by the civil rights movement—and its call for jobs, dignity and freedom—they demanded inclusion in better-paying, mostly white firefighting, police, teaching and clerical jobs. And black businesses demanded access to lucrative city contracts. Like other black mayors, Washington hired more black workers, expanded affirmative action programs and extended more contracts to minority-owned firms, in the process undoing years of machine neglect.

For all of his affinities to Washington, Obama expressed ambivalence about one of Chicago's most visible black politicians. Writing shortly after Washington's untimely death in 1987, just months into his second

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term in office, Obama hailed Washington's willingness to stand up to Chicago's machine leaders. But rather than understanding Washington as a coalition builder, he portrayed him as the embodiment of race-conscious politics, noting "the surge of political empowerment around the country" that had fired up black voters. But for Obama, the "only principle that came through" during Washington's administration was "getting our fair share," namely, efforts to use the power of the mayoralty for black group advancement, and that did not suffice. Obama was skeptical that black political power, like Washington's mayoralty, would have anything more than "an important symbolic effect." What Obama left out was perhaps the most important part of Washington's relatively progressive policy: his efforts to channel community development block grants to neighborhood groups, to shift development dollars toward the construction of affordable housing and to increase capital spending to improve the city's poor and working-class neighborhoods. Each of these initiatives met with significant resistance, from developers and planners who favored large-scale downtown redevelopment and from Washington's opponents among the aldermen. Overall, Obama echoed analysts who viewed the black ascent to urban power as a "hollow prize," the dubious triumph of taking over local governments just as jobs were disappearing, population steadily declining and tax revenue plummeting. City jobs for black Chicagoans were not enough to stem the effects of decades of disinvestment. Pinstripe patronage for black entrepreneurs would not benefit the poor. And the problems facing urban residents were larger than any single elected official could solve.

If the distinctions between civil rights and black power—between Martin and Malcolm—were always blurry in practice, by the mid-1980s journalists and academics drew bright lines between them, and often polemically, as a Manichaean struggle between a civic universalism, on one hand, and a narrow particularism, on the other. A growing cadre of white liberals called for a restoration of the New Deal order, longing for a past when a shared class consciousness had supplanted a divisive ethno-racial politics. And others called for a resuscitation of a common American creed of equality and opportunity, and a rejection of race consciousness and multiculturalism. Writing in the age of Reagan, they lamented the waning of social democracy—but they turned inward, blaming race-conscious leftists even more than conservatives for the "unraveling" of liberalism. In the late 1980s, their sense of crisis was heightened by highly publicized racial conflicts, especially in New York City. They focused their attention on racially divisive street protests led by angry rhetoricians, usually men without large organizational bases but with considerable talent, most prominently the Rev. Al Sharpton (who had burst onto the national scene in 1987 as the champion of Tawana Brawley, an African-American teenager whose fabricated story of a violent rape and cover-up conspiracy dominated headlines).

At the same time, an influential group of academics and journalists turned their often formidable talents to retelling the history of civil rights, especially in the North, usually from the vantage point of aggrieved working- and middle-class whites. Accounts of the Boston busing crisis and racial strife in Brooklyn, two of the bloodiest battlegrounds in the Northern freedom struggle, offered sympathetic portrayals of urban ethnics who viewed affirmative action as a zero-sum game, resented school desegregation as the meddling of "limousine liberals" and were bitter at civil rights leaders' representations of their politics as incorrigibly racist. In these narratives, white working-class and lower-middle-class Northern-

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"Torture, after it's done, is meaningless. Ten days later, you're the same person as you were before. . . . In its moment, certainly, you are in its hold but, a short while later, you're the same person."—Mohsen Makhmalbaf

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ers, only a minority of whom ever supported the black freedom struggle, even at its peak in the mid-'60s, were recast as well-meaning, incipient racial liberals who would have joined an interracial coalition had they not been alienated by the "excesses" of the civil rights movement and black power.

Parallel controversies about race and identity roiled universities in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A vocal interracial group of leftists, mostly based in humanities departments and law schools, embraced the politics of diversity and difference. Their opponents, a mix of embattled campus conservatives, disaffected liberals and public intellectuals, rose up to defend the university against them. The most heated battles in the campus culture wars were fought over race and representation: namely, the merits of affirmative action in higher education and the inclusion of minorities and women in the curriculum. Should difference and race consciousness be cultivated in the classroom, or should the mission of higher education be colorblind and universalistic?

Obama downplayed King's call to an all-out battle against materialism and privilege.

Harvard Law School in the late 1980s was an especially contentious place—the Eastern Front of the culture wars. In 1988, the semester before Obama started classes, the Harvard campus was bitterly divided over accusations that history professor Stephan Thernstrom was racially insensitive. Students in a course that he taught on race and ethnicity accused him of silencing the voices of blacks by assigning proslavery tracts but not slave narratives, and they charged him with using his lectures to promote conservative views on affirmative action, the black family and urban poverty. Thernstrom countered that his critics practiced latter-day McCarthyism, silencing their academic adversaries and imposing a stifling leftist ideological conformity in the classroom.

During Obama's second year at Harvard the law school exploded in racial controversy. When the law faculty did not make a job offer to visiting faculty member Regina Austin, an African-American professor from the University of Pennsylvania, the Coalition for Civil Rights accused the law school dean of racism, railed against the fact that the law school had no tenured black women and only a handful of nonwhite faculty members, and led a series of teach-ins and protests, including a sit-in at the dean's office, to demand the diversification of the law school. Derrick Bell, the law school's first tenured black faculty member, took a "leave of conscience" in protest (and later resigned his post). Members of Harvard's chapter of the Federalist Society, a conservative legal group, criticized affirmative action and contended that any policies to mandate diversity in Harvard's student body and faculty would sacrifice quality by undermining the principle of meritocracy. Both sides wrapped themselves in the mantle of the civil rights movement. The black students claimed that their protest was in the tradition of the black freedom struggle—indeed, at one rally, Obama compared Derrick Bell to Rosa Parks. And conservative students countered that they were being faithful to King's vision of a colorblind society, and that Austin's supporters were practitioners of a divisive identity politics rooted in black power.

Despite his sympathies with Austin and Bell, Obama positioned himself as someone who could reconcile Harvard's bitter differences by bringing a tone of civility to the debate. He refused to denounce his critics and hurl polemics. In the words of Bradford Berenson, a conservative student who would later work in the second Bush administration, "Even though he was clearly a liberal, he didn't appear to the conservatives in the [*Harvard Law*] *Review* to be taking sides in the tribal warfare." Obama's position in the middle allowed him to build a winning coalition of liberals and conservatives in his bid to be elected president of the *Review* in February 1990. Later that year, in a dispute about the *Review*'s affirmative action policy, Obama again attempted to reconcile the opposing camps. He defended the principle of affirmative action while suggesting that he respected the "depth" and "sincerity" of its opponents' beliefs. Racial preferences, he contended, would "enhance the representativeness" of the *Review*'s staff, but not "at the price of any 'lower standard' of editorial excellence." Obama's intervention did not lead to anything more than a momentary cease-fire in Harvard's culture wars. The law school continued to be intensely polarized. Still, it was a defining moment in his racial education.

Obama's experience at Harvard tempered his sympathy for the race-conscious politics of the black freedom struggle. His emphasis on reconciliation over confrontation dovetailed with his ongoing search for an identity—a defining story, a way to make sense of American history and his place in it. That journey inevitably led him back in time to the Jim Crow South—a place whose indignities and struggles he had not experienced. Obama found himself drawn to "a series of images, romantic images, of a past I had never known." His search for authenticity and purpose led him to "the sit-ins, the marches, the jailhouse songs" of the Southern struggle for civil rights. There, on the streets of Birmingham, in the pews of Atlanta, in the jails of Mississippi, Obama found himself, his community and his calling. "This is my story," Obama excitedly told a friend in the late 1980s, after reading Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954–63*, the Pulitzer Prize–winning first volume of his epic biography of Martin Luther King Jr.

As Obama moved onto the political stage, he distanced himself from the black politicians who had paved his way by offering a generational critique, reiterating the conventional wisdom that "black politics is still shaped by the '60s and black power." He aligned himself instead with the Southern freedom struggle, whose history, once divisive, had become domesticated, transformed into a narrative of national redemption. Obama launched his 2003 campaign for the Senate with a speech punctuated by the refrain: "What would Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. say?" Obama downplayed King's scathing critique of moderation, his call to an all-out battle against materialism and privilege and his demand for a "revolution of values." Instead, he portrayed King as the soft-spoken prophet of fairness, hope, opportunity and ill-defined change.

Obama read widely in civil rights history, taught antidiscrimination law at the University of Chicago Law School and steeped himself in the historical and scholarly literature on race, poverty and inequality. But none of that history was particularly useful for an ambitious politician. Situating himself in a current of civil rights history that emphasized its radical strains would be political suicide. But there was something deeper than simple political instrumentality at work. During his journey through the polarized racial world of late-twentieth-century America, Obama discovered his calling. It was to overcome the acrimonious history of racial polarization, whether it be black power or the culture wars—to act on the understanding that such polarization was anathema to national unity.

For Obama, as for all political leaders,

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Notice of Class Action, Proposed Class Settlement and Hearing
***Barham, et al., v. Ramsey, et al.*, Case No. 02-CV-02283 (EGS)(JMF)**

If you were arrested in Pershing Park on September 27, 2002 in Washington, D.C. in connection with the IMF / World Bank related demonstrations, you could receive up to $18,000 from a class action settlement

Class Counsel are the attorneys of the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund

A settlement has been proposed in a class action lawsuit about the illegality of the arrests of approximately 400 protesters and others **in Pershing Park** on Friday, September 27, 2002 in Washington, D.C. Many of those arrested were surrounded by police in the park, moved onto mass arrest busses, were in custody including overnight, and were restrained wrist-to-ankle with plastic "flexcuffs."

Who's Included?

The class is "all persons who were arrested in Pershing Park in the District of Columbia on September 27, 2002." **There were protest-related arrests elsewhere on September 27, 2002 that are the subject of other suits. This settlement pertains only to the Pershing Park arrests.**

What is Proposed?

The proposed settlement will provide up to $18,000 per class member in compensation. Attorneys fees will be paid separately and will not be deducted from this amount. In addition, the arrests of class members will be expunged and declared legally null and void. The class has demanded and the D.C. Government has agreed to and has imposed, substantial equitable relief and/or restrictions on police conduct to prevent recurrence.

Your legal rights are affected whether you act, or don't act. **Strict deadlines will apply**.

Submit a Proof of Claim Form	The only way to get a payment. **Deadline: July 15, 2010**
Exclude Yourself	Get no payment. This is the only option that allows you to ever be part of any other lawsuit about the legal claims in this case. **Deadline: July 15, 2010**
Object	Write to the Court about why you don't like the settlement. **Deadline: July 15, 2010**
Go to a Hearing	Ask to speak in Court about the fairness of the settlement. **Fairness Hearing: September 17, 2010 at 10:00 a.m., Courtroom 24A, United States District Court for the District of Columbia, 333 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.** **Judge Emmet G. Sullivan presiding.**
Do Nothing	Get no payment. Give up rights.

Getting More Information

This is a summary notice. More details are in the detailed class notice and the Settlement Agreement. You can get a copy of the forms and case documents and get more information:

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by calling (toll-free) **1-877-678-0736**

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history provides a scaffolding for politics: it is full of inspiration, examples, lessons and analogies. The past can be used—and reinterpreted—for purposes of image creation, political mobilization, coalition building and policy-making. Political actors create a useful past, sifting from it what resonates with their constituents, opinion leaders and the general public, whitewashing those elements that are jarring and unsettling or inconvenient. And Obama did that with King. The history of the civil rights struggle—told through Moses and Joshua and King—was a historical theology, a civic religion, a fundamentally Christian story of suffering, martyrdom and redemption. King had cleansed America from its original sin of slavery, and Obama was his heir. By the time Obama was inaugurated president, he had recast himself as an agent of national unification, one who could finally bring to fruition the few lingering, unmet promises of the civil rights movement. What Obama called "my story" became "our story." ■

Scoured Light

by ANGE MLINKO

James Marcus Schuyler wrote like an angel. That is, he fashioned poems from flawless American English ("English" and "angels" are parties to an old pun, if not to a shared etymology) and made it look like the easiest thing in the world. A case in point: "Light From Canada," from his collection *The Crystal Lithium* (1972). His caressing eye is accurate; his words are pithy and elegant; and his emotional tenor is of someone striving for a state of grace, though pain is always near—and fresh as paint:

> A wonderful freshness, air
> that billows like bedsheets
> on a clothesline and the clouds
> hang in a traffic jam: summer
> heads home. Evangeline,
> our light is scoured and Nova
> Scotian and of a clarity that
> opens up the huddled masses
> of the stolid spruce so you
> see them in their bristling
> individuality. The other
> day, walking among them, I
> cast my gaze upon the ground
> in hope of orchids and,
> pendant, dead, a sharp shadow
> in the shade, a branch gouged
> and left me "scarred forever
> 'neath the eye." Not quite. Not
> the cut, but the surprise, and
> how, when her dress caught fire,
> Longfellow's wife spun
> into his arms and in the dying
> of its flaring, died. The
> irreparable, which changes
> nothing that went before
> though it ends it. Above the wash
> and bark of rumpled water, a gull
> falls down the wind to dine
> on fish that swim up to do same.

Ange Mlinko lives in Beirut. Her most recent book of poems is Shoulder Season.

Other Flowers
Uncollected Poems.
By James Schuyler.
Edited by James Meetze and Simon Pettet.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 220 pp. $28.

Schuyler may have written like an angel, but he would never write of angels. He was an empiricist. As with Elizabeth Bishop and Lorine Niedecker, Charles Darwin was one of his favorite writers—and there Darwin is, in "Light From Canada," in the gull and the fish who meet at the intersection of mutual hunger. The great pleasure and sense of health the poet takes from the air (the bedsheets-on-a-clothesline simile, the "scoured" air, the unclumped bristles) is undeniably invigorating. It is also ambivalent. The force that drives the air down from Canada is a harbinger of winter and death, which Schuyler rises to meet like the fish. Under the guise of twentieth-century free verse, this poem snaps shut with a (visual) rhyme as neatly as any sonnet.

The courtliness of Schuyler's verse sprang miraculously from the shambles of his life. He was a late bloomer, 46 years old when his first full-length collection, *Freely Espousing*, was published in 1969, and each successive volume of poems seemed wrenched from an ever more precarious existence. Schuyler enjoyed scarce advantages to begin with. He was born in 1923 in Chicago to Midwestern, middle-class parents who were divorced by the time he was 6. He was forced to take the name of his antagonistic stepfather after his mother's remarriage and rarely saw his father (a "heavy, jolly, well-read man") again. (He changed his name back in adulthood.) He attended Bethany College in West Virginia—not Harvard, like his future New York School confreres Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery and Kenneth Koch. Having fared poorly in his studies, he left Bethany without a degree and in 1943 joined the Navy. That ended with a dishonorable discharge: he went AWOL on a drunken bender, and at his hearing it came out that he was gay. All his life Schuyler would struggle with alcoholism and manic depression, with hospitalizations paid for by friends—W.H. Auden and James Merrill among them.

Schuyler was Auden's secretary during a sojourn on Ischia in 1949. "Well, if this is poetry, I'm certainly not going to write any myself," he reminisced in an interview late in life. His long apprenticeship must have frustrated him; he developed antagonisms toward his mentors, including his friend and occasional roommate Frank O'Hara. They had a falling out that remained unresolved at O'Hara's death, in 1966, at the age of 40. Schuyler's elegy for O'Hara, "Buried at Springs," starts with a shock: "There is a hornet in the room/and one of us will have to go/out the window into the late/August midafternoon sun. I/won." It was O'Hara's highly enjambed lyrical monologue "The Three-Penny Opera," published in *Accent* magazine in 1951, that moved Schuyler to try his hand at poetry. The big revelation: "it's the matter of where the line turns," Schuyler explained to himself in his diary. One of his most emblematic poems, "Salute," was composed at the Bloomington mental hospital in White Plains that year:

> Past is past, and if one
> remembers what one meant
> to do and never did, is
> not to have thought to do
> enough? Like that gathering of one of each I
> planned, to gather one
> of each kind of clover,
> daisy, paintbrush that
> grew in that field
> the cabin stood in and
> study them one afternoon
> before they wilted. Past
> is past. I salute
> that various field.

"Salute" has all the earmarks of a mature Schuyler poem: an eye for nature, an ear for "where the line turns," a sense of spontaneous utterance and of scrupulous proportion. His technique would loosen as he aged (the tone of his last collection, *A Few Days*, from 1985, was downright chatty), but right from the start he made well-spoken middle-Atlantic vernacular speech the ground of the

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poem. It didn't need the metrical apparatus of the English (Audenesque) tradition; its rhythms materialize in the enjambments. And if the enjambments looked arbitrary at first glance, so much the better: the ragged edge of the arbitrary, provisional or contingent is exactly where the poet communicates his lyrical vulnerability. A prosodic and tonal balancing act replaces mastery in the old sense. William Carlos Williams tried to theorize free verse into something called a "variable foot"; Charles Olson tried to theorize it into a "composition by field"; Schuyler simply wrote the poems, and his view of a "various field" crystallizes his sense of style without pontification.

Schuyler thrived as a pastoral poet, even when he lived in Manhattan. He modeled his themes after the paintings of his friends Jane Freilicher and Fairfield Porter, who modeled their work on Édouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard, painters of domestic happiness whose insignia was the floral centerpiece. To Schuyler, painting epitomized the pure joy of being. The happiest period of his life was the twelve or so years he lived with Porter and his family in Southampton, New York, and on Great Spruce Head Island, Maine. The poet's childhood was scarred by a broken home, and his mental illness made it impossible to create a home for himself in adulthood. But when, following a breakdown, he was taken in by the Porters, he achieved a measure of stability that allowed him to develop his gift. According to biographer Justin Spring, Porter's interest in Schuyler was romantic. (In turn, Schuyler referred to Porter, who wrote art criticism for this magazine, as his "best friend.") Anne Porter—who bore Fairfield five children, managed the household single-handedly and was an accomplished poet herself—embraced him nonetheless. Their works became as intertwined as their lives. Schuyler is portrayed in several family paintings from the era; *Freely Espousing* is dedicated to Fairfield and Anne. Fairfield wrote to O'Hara: "Jimmy is writing a new novel, and sometimes I hear him typing and often I hear a woodpecker and think that it is he."

Spring suggested that Schuyler became the great elegiac poet we know today because he lost this paradise: his arrangement with the Porters ended in 1973, and he bounced around for several dissolute years in temporary apartments and single-room-occupancy hotels. In 1979, and again with considerable financial assistance from his friends, he set up residence in Room 625 of the Chelsea Hotel and stayed there, struggling with a variety of health problems, until his death from a stroke in 1991. A plaque at the entrance of the Chelsea commemorates him, alongside other famous habitués such as Dylan Thomas. As difficult as those later years were, Schuyler was nonetheless adored and fêted. His great works, "Hymn to Life," "The Morning of the Poem," "A Few Days" and the novel *What's for Dinner?*, were written during this era. He'd had the approbation, early on, of Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop as well as Howard Moss, Bishop's editor at *The New Yorker*; in 1981 he won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Morning of the Poem*. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 1988 he gave his first-ever public reading at the DIA Foundation, a short walk from his Chelsea abode. The line for it coiled around the block.

In the years since Schuyler's death there has been a steady trickle of posthumous publications under prestigious imprints. Farrar, Straus and Giroux published his *Collected Poems* in 1993. Black Sparrow gave us his *Diary* and *Selected Art Writings* a few years later. His and John Ashbery's collaborative novel *A Nest of Ninnies* became a cult classic on its reissue by Ecco in 1997. New York Review Books reprinted his two novels, *Alfred and Guinevere* and *What's for Dinner?* as NYRB Classics. Turtle Point Press published his *Selected Letters* and then, in a separate volume, his letters to Frank O'Hara. Now James Meetze and Simon Pettet, who edited his art writings, have edited a volume of previously unpublished poems, *Other Flowers*. The title refers, of course, to "Salute."

Schuyler wrote poems on flowers all his life—poems of appreciation, without heavy-handedness, yet he knew that a wealth of literary, anthropological and evolutionary portent dwelled in the gesture. The salient thing he learned from flora was that beauty is inextricable from brevity. Here is one of his art reviews in its entirety:

> Vieira da Silva (Knoedler; October 3-26), Portuguese-Parisian abstractionist of international reputation, winner of the top prize in the 1961 Sao Paulo biennial, is seen in atmospheric scourings sunk in rubbed greys. Striking among the large canvases is *Winter Voyage*, like a crowd of tears on a train window. She has given up her old preoccupation with a shifting network of depth: forms now float to the surface and rest there, as in the lovely *White Night*. The white crackling *August* suggests a sun-smitten fishing village. Often a single color is fractured through a painting, the way water dissects light.

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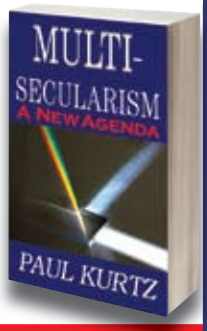

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> The new emphasis on brush stroke seems to release a native painterliness hampered in the past by ideas. Least successful are some purely calligraphic paintings: a little too Paris 1961.

Schuyler's diary, too, telegraphs mood and intention through tight, lyrical descriptions; entire entries are devoted to weather, which is always meant to communicate something about internal weather as well: "Clouds shaped out of white and drama and what skies! Cobalt; sea-faded; a vivid, faint, blue green that tastes like salty lips. The whole room seems to quiver, physically tremble, from the play of light-in-leaves." If paintings can be described like the weather, and the weather like painting, it is not because of that old chestnut the "pathetic fallacy," which John Ruskin inveighed against. The weather does not sympathize with the human soul, but Schuyler well knew the human soul synchronizes sympathetically with the weather.

Qualities of the fleeting blossom and the mercurial sky infuse the poems in *Other Flowers*, which is rife with exercises, sketches, collages and pastiches. The many dedicatory poems to friends, especially Ashbery, suggest bantering amusements, inside jokes. Yet even readers who embrace this poet's celebrations of ephemera may be skeptical of inclusions like the three-line "Starlings": "The starlings are singing!/You could call it singing./At any rate, they *are* starlings."

It would be precious to defend everything Schuyler wrote, and he would have been the first to agree. In the late poem "A Few Days," he remarked of a notebook poem he wrote for Ruth Kligman, then discarded: "when I'm dead some creep will publish it in a thin/volume called *Uncollected Verse*. It will be a collector's item. I hate to think/of the contents of that volume." This unexpectedly steely glint gives a hint of Schuyler's rigor. One may have wished for a little more rigor in the editorial apparatus of *Other Flowers*. Simon Pettet admits to organizing the poems "not entirely according to chronology, not entirely according to theme, but, I hope, at all times keenly respectful of both." This is waffling.

Thin as it is, *Other Flowers* provides a valuable correction to the idea of Schuyler as an unmediated straight shooter. One gets the sense sometimes that he is loved as an anti-Ashbery (which is strange, since the two poets were devoted to each other and each other's work) and that his art was merely a matter of getting out of the way of his beautiful feelings. Schuyler himself seemed to approve this image in a contributor's note he wrote for *Best American Poetry 1990*: "Like many other of my poems, ["Haze"] is about what can be seen out the window: except here, though nothing is said about it, the poem combines the views from two windows, and several times of day. I do not usually take such license."

That is indeed the sort of poet one encounters, often, in the great works of the *Collected Poems*. *Other Flowers* emphasizes a different poet: the experimenter. Schuyler wrote sestinas and acrostics and jokes in the vein of other game-playing New York Schoolers. And like his friends in that oft-misunderstood grouping, he made it serve that most Keatsian directive: soul-making. An early poem about his father is titled "Love's Photograph (*or* Father and Son)":

> Detected little things: a peach-pit
> basket watch-chain charm, an ivory
> cross wound with ivory ivy, a natural
> cross. The Tatoosh Mountains,
> opaque
> crater lakes, a knickerbockered boy
> who, drowned, smiles for a seeming
> ever
> on ice skates on ice-skate-scratched
> ice, an enlarged scratched snapshot.
> Taken, taken. Mad charges corrupt to
> madness their sane nurses.

The private associations of this list would overwhelm any sense of communicative pleasure were it not for the pitch-perfect musical play, the *sprezzatura* of the collaged effect and the breathless turns of register from heartbreaking to humorous to heartbreaking—the same characteristics, in fact, of "Light From Canada." The poem preceding "Love's Photograph" is "Mother's Land," more opaque yet equally engrossing, with its étude-like music. These pendant parent poems are worth the price of admission to *Other Flowers*. They are also rare, for Schuyler would reject an overly private poetry as he matured. As James McCourt wrote of him, "He wanted more than anything else to be understood by the Common Reader (as designated by Virginia Woolf, a writer he greatly admired)."

For all his modesty—the aw-shucks-I'm-just-looking-out-the-window variety—Schuyler was ambitious; he wanted to reconcile near-incommensurable things. The impulse to memorialize one's unique experience collides with the desire to communicate with the Common Reader, which stumbles over the aspiration to make an artistic object, which knocks against the memorializing impulse. In 1959 Donald Allen was editing the influential anthology *The New American Poetry, 1945–1960*, and he asked Schuyler about the literary influences on the New York School. Schuyler's response is characteristically amused: "But if you want to represent the influence of readers as systematically omnivorous as Frank, John A., Prof. Koch and, me too, well: wow." Schuyler explained that "Stevens and Williams both inspire greater freedom than the others, Stevens of the imagination, Williams of subject and style." Another influence was Hart Crane: "very much, and perhaps for extra-poetical reasons that aren't so extra. But he has exactly what's missing in 'the poetry should be written as carefully as prose' poets: sensibility and heart."

Sensibility and heart are key. In the same letter, he avowed that "Pasternak has meant more to us than any American poet. Even in monstrous translations his lyrics make the hair on the back of one's neck curl." This love of Pasternak (regarded now as then as "sentimental" by reductive avant-gardists) trumps formalism. Even so, it is clear that International Modernism underlay Schuyler's plain style, or as Marianne Moore put it, "plain American which cats and dogs can read."

"February," from *Freely Espousing*, is perhaps Schuyler's most well-known casual snapshot of the view out his window. Nothing happens in the poem, and yet it swells to a close that is both prosaic and glorious:

> I can't get over
> how it all works in together
> like a woman who just came to her
> window
> and stands there filling it
> jogging her baby in her arms.
> She's so far off. Is it the light
> that makes the baby pink?
> I can see the little fists
> and the rocking-horse motion of her
> breasts.
> It's getting grayer and gold and chilly.
> Two dog-size lions face each other
> at the corners of a roof.
> It's the yellow dust inside the tulips.
> It's the shape of a tulip.
> It's the water in the drinking glass
> the tulips are in.
> It's a day like any other.

Schuyler explained the genesis of this poem to Nancy Batie, a reader in Vancouver who wrote him a fan letter about it:

> It was late February and I had very recently returned from Europe, where for the first time I had visited Palermo, and made an excursion to see the temples at Agrigento (where there were also wild snap-dragons in

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blooms among the lion colored drums of fallen columns), a rather dusty and disappointing affair at the time, but on which it was a pleasure to recollect. The day on which I wrote the poem I had been trying to write a poem in a regular form about (I think) Palermo, the Palazzo Abatelli, which has splendid carved stone ropes around its doors and windows, and the chapels decorated by Serpotta with clouds of plaster cherubs; the poem turned out laborious and flat, and looking out the window I saw that something marvelous was happening to the light, transforming everything. It then occurred to me that this happened more often than not (a beautiful sunset I mean) and that it was "a day like any other," which I put down as a title. The rest of the poem popped out of its own accord. Or so it seems now.

The account rings true. Yet it underscores the intensely synthetic nature of the lyric process. While the poem did indeed "pop out" as in our wildest dreams of spontaneous creation, this only followed upon hours of labor on a very different sort of poem: a recollection—a recollection of ancient ruins, no less—and one in "regular form." How un-Schuyler-like! Rereading "February" in light of this letter, the quintessential "what can be seen out the window" poem is really about the intrusion of memory on the present. Early in the poem he remembers "the sun was on the sea/by the temples we'd gone to see." The memory of this destination blends with the here-and-now in which a mother and baby appear in a window. Now we don't know anymore if the lions that face each other at the corners of the roof are in New York or in Palermo ("wild snap-dragons in blooms among the lion colored drums"). Is he describing a prewar building in midtown or a palazzo? Is that an ordinary mother and baby framed by a window, or is this Madonna and Child iconography come to life?

Nothing is simple, not even the formal austerity of looking out the window ("I do not usually take such license"). This was Schuyler's shrewdness: to develop his gift for spontaneity in the direction of elegy, and simultaneously to sublimate his sense of loss in keen attention to the present. Spontaneity looks forward; elegy, backward. Spontaneity is light; elegy is heavy. The weight of the world is a ballast against the levitating effect of James Schuyler's courteous English, which made him our most angelic poet: full of air, intelligence, light. ■

Talking On Against Time

by SCOTT SHERMAN

The Paris Review Interviews
Edited by Philip Gourevitch.
Picador. Four vols. 1,946 pp. Paper $65.

When *The Paris Review* appeared in 1953, its format was familiar to aficionados of literary periodicals: the first issue featured poems, short fiction and a pair of essays on trends in French and Italian literature. But there was one surprise: a thirteen-page Q&A with E.M. Forster, headed by an image of a manuscript page of thirty-three dense lines of spidery script, beginning with the words "Gentlemen. Gentlemen," culled from an unfinished novel. The interview itself, conducted in Forster's high-ceilinged rooms at King's College, Cambridge, was refreshingly blunt. "INTERVIEWERS: [We] have also never felt comfortable about Leonard Bast's seduction of Helen in *Howards End*…it came off allegorically but not realistically. FORSTER: I think you may be right." Subsequent Q&As with Dorothy Parker, William Faulkner, James Thurber, Nelson Algren and Truman Capote helped to establish *The Paris Review* as a vibrant new literary periodical, and Ernest Hemingway remarked, "I have all the copies of *The Paris Review* and like the interviews very much. They will make a good book when collected."

The first collection of those interviews, titled *Writers at Work*, was published by Viking Press in 1958. A second volume, featuring Q&As with Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and Mary McCarthy, appeared in 1963. More than a dozen other volumes would follow, and the editors eventually expanded the series to include discussions with playwrights, biographers, nonfiction luminaries, editors and the occasional literary critic; but novelists would always remain at the heart of the enterprise. Nearly all of the interviews were overseen by George Plimpton, who, until his death in 2003, edited the transcripts (and the published collections, most of which are now out of print) with devotion and dramatic flair.

In the decades that followed the journal's debut, perhaps only the Q&As in *Playboy* equaled its own in quality and reputation. But the two publications adhered to very different editorial practices and procedures. The *Playboy* interviews were often combative and controversial, and *Playboy*'s editors were not generally inclined to defer to the needs and whims of the subject during the editing process. (*Playboy*, moreover, did not limit its Q&As to literary figures: the magazine published interviews, up to 25,000 words in length, with Malcolm X, Jimmy Hoffa, Bertrand Russell, Fidel Castro, Albert Speer and John Lennon.)

The Paris Review settled on a more conciliatory approach. As Philip Gourevitch explains in his introduction to a new edition of *Paris Review* interviews, a four-volume compilation of greatest hits, "A *Paris Review* interview is always a collaboration, not a confrontation.… The purpose is not to catch writers off guard, but to elicit from them the fullest possible reckoning of what interests them most." To guarantee that outcome, editors have always granted the subject final approval of the transcript. Gourevitch, a distinguished reporter who recently completed a five-year stint as *PR*'s editor, admits that its protocols are "unapologetically at odds with journalistic practice."

The logistics of a *PR* interview varied widely. Herbert Gold mailed questions to Vladimir Nabokov at the Montreux-Palace Hotel in Switzerland. When Gold arrived at the hotel, he found an envelope waiting for him: "the questions had been shaken up and transformed into an interview." Saul Bellow polished the transcript in hamburger joints and on park benches near the University of Chicago. Don DeLillo answered questions at an Anselm Kiefer exhibition in Manhattan and in "a comically posh bar." Cynthia Ozick sat at her dining room table with a typewriter and spontaneously typed out answers to questions posed by an interviewer seated a few feet away. Jorge Luis Borges met *PR* in a "large, ornate, high-ceilinged chamber" at the National Library in Buenos Aires, surrounded by Piranesi's etchings. Pablo Neruda was interviewed on a stone bench facing the sea at his home in Isla Negra, Chile.

In the introduction to her 1984 interview with Philip Roth, Hermione Lee outlined a process that she says she found "extremely interesting": in the summer of 1983 she spoke with Roth for a day and a half in his room at the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall, after which he revised the transcripts she sent him. Roth and Lee continued their dialogue in early 1984, and again Roth went to work on the transcript—processing "raw chunks of talk" into "stylish, energetic, concentrated

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prose." Intricate sentences were spawned: "Any satirist writing a futuristic novel who had imagined a President Reagan during the Eisenhower years would have been accused of perpetrating a piece of crude, contemptible, adolescent, anti-American wickedness, when in fact he would have succeeded as prophetic sentry just where Orwell failed." Lee referred dryly to her published interview with Roth as "Philip Roth's presentation of himself."

The problem is that when people present themselves, a great deal of material is left out, and the moral, intellectual and biographical contours of the interview are substantially altered. Reading the finished transcript of a *Paris Review* interview, it's not difficult to detect what has been omitted: Norman Mailer, in two interviews forty years apart, was not asked why he stabbed his second wife, Adele, in their Manhattan apartment in November 1960; Louis-Ferdinand Céline was not asked about his fascist and anti-Semitic pronouncements in the 1930s and '40s; Doris Lessing was not asked about her life-altering experiences in the Communist Party; Gabriel García Márquez was not asked about his cozy relationship with Fidel Castro (for a splendidly combative interview with the Colombian master, excavate Claudia Dreifus's 1982 Q&A in *Playboy*); V.S. Naipaul was not asked about the chilling scenes of sexual degradation in *Guerrillas* and *A Bend in the River*; and Peter Matthiessen was not asked about his work as a CIA agent in Paris in the early 1950s, during which time he founded *The Paris Review* [see Sherman, "In His League," February 2, 2009]. Indeed, Philip Roth is one of the few writers in the *Paris Review* interview series who allowed substantial criticism of his *oeuvre* into the final transcript, which resulted in an unusually supple and invigorating interview.

Since 1953 *The Paris Review* has printed more than 300 interviews. Some are cringe-inducing: Cynthia Ozick offers a master class in self-pity and narcissism. Some are marred by macho posturing: William Styron felt compelled to single out a "fairy axis" wing in American fiction. Some are diminished by excessive timidity on the part of the interviewer, as when Plimpton could barely string questions together in the presence of his hero, Hemingway. And some interviewers behaved like *paparazzi*: Jan Morris endured numerous questions from Leo Lerman about her sex-change operation.

But hardly any *PR* interviews are humdrum; many are extremely impressive, and a few are perfect. Consider Harold Flender's 1968 conversation with Isaac Bashevis Singer. Like many *PR* interviews, it has a pithy, evocative introduction: "Singer works at a small, cluttered desk in the living room.... His name is still listed in the Manhattan telephone directory, and hardly a day goes by without his receiving several calls from strangers who have read something he has written and want to talk to him about it. Until recently, he would invite anyone who called for lunch, or at least coffee.... He loves birds and has two pet parakeets who fly about his apartment uncaged." After recounting his difficult early years in New York during the Depression ("Take such a thing as the subway—we didn't have a subway in Poland. And we didn't have a name for it in Yiddish"), Singer goes on to describe a literary "misfortune" he sidestepped as a young writer:

> [The modern Yiddish writer] was brought up with the idea that one should get out of Jewishness and become universal. And because he tried so hard to become universal, he became very provincial. This is the tragedy.... They told me, Why do you write about devils and imps? Why don't you write about the situation of the Jews, about Zionism, about socialism, about the unions, and about how the tailors must get a raise, and so on and so on?... But young writers are sometimes very stubborn. I refused to go their way.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Don't you believe in a better world?
>
> SINGER: I believe in a better world, but I don't think that a fiction writer who sits down to write a novel to make a better world can achieve anything. The better world will be done by many people, by the politicians, by the statesmen, by the sociologists. I don't know who is going to create it or if there will ever be a better world. One thing I am sure is that the novelists will not do it.

In its seamless flow, sly meanderings and subtle humor, the interview reads like a short story by Singer himself, as all parties involved doubtless intended. By the end of the interview, one feels that interviewer Harold Flender, a writer and filmmaker who died in 1975, and *PR*'s editors have captured the essence of Singer, and that there is not much more to say about the man and his work.

Nearly all of the *PR* interviews emphasize matters of craft and composition; every hammer, nail and wrench in the writer's toolbox is removed for inspection. Some writers are exasperated by the approach: William Gaddis, in his 1987 interview, discouraged his interlocutor from boring him with "talk-show pap" like "on which side of the paper do you write?" But the same questions, with minor variations, reappear in all the interviews: How many hours a day do you write? ("Eleven to one continuously is a very good day's work. Then you can read and play tennis or snooker. Two hours." —Martin Amis.) Do you prefer a pencil, a pen or a machine? ("Lined Bristol cards and well sharpened, not too hard, pencils capped with erasers." —Vladimir Nabokov.) Where do you store a gestating manuscript? ("Another thing I need to do, when I'm near the end of the book, is sleep in the same room with it." —Joan Didion.)

But the best interviews in the series glide past the customary questions about craft and expose a rich vein of material that any serious biographer would be elated to possess. James M. Cain suggested that his literary embrace of the vernacular—his most famous novel begins, "They threw me off the hay truck about noon"—was a rebellion against his father, a prim college president who insisted on polite and proper English usage: "The first man... who enchanted me not only by what he told me but by *how* he talked, was Ike Newton, who put in the brick wall over at Washington College, right after my father became president." Don DeLillo reflected on the research he did for *Libra*: "I went to New Orleans, Dallas, Fort Worth and Miami and looked at houses and streets and hospitals, schools and libraries—this is mainly Oswald I'm tracking but others as well—and after a while the characters in my mind and in my notebooks came out into the world." E.L. Doctorow recalled the moment he knew he had brought *The Book of Daniel* to fruition. He gave his wife the manuscript and went for a long walk on the beach in southern California: "I came back to the house in the late afternoon, the house in shadows now, and there was Helen sitting in the same chair and the manuscript was all piled upside down on the table and she couldn't speak; she was crying, there were these enormous tears running down her cheeks."

The finest *PR* interviews throw open, to a certain extent, the elusive gates of creativity. The interview with Salman Rushdie excavates childhood experiences in which the writerly imagination was seeded. Rushdie recalls a trip to the high mountains of Kashmir when he was 12. When his family arrived at the guesthouse, they discovered that the pony carrying the food had gone missing. A guide was dispatched to the local village to request food and was rebuffed, which drove Mrs. Rushdie to despair:

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About an hour later we saw this procession of a half-dozen people coming up from the village, bringing food. The village headman came up to us and said, I want to apologize to you, because when we told the guy there wasn't any food we thought you were a Hindu family. But, he said, when we heard it was a Muslim family we had to bring food. We won't accept any payment, and we apologize for having been so discourteous.

Some of the interviews pinpoint the precise moment a writer discovers the work of a lifetime. In his extraordinary 1985 interview with *PR*'s Jeanne McCulloch, biographer Leon Edel described his precocious journey through Paris and London in the 1920s in search of material on Henry James, a quest that brought him face to face with Edith Wharton, Ford Madox Ford and George Bernard Shaw. Edel soon obtained a doctorate from the Sorbonne, but the Depression forced him to work in journalism for the next seventeen years. And then he visited the Widener Library at Harvard:

I found myself one day in a long underground room with very long tables and boxes and trunks and papers and letters everywhere: William James to Henry, Henry to William, Alice to her brothers, all neatly lined up, also letters of mama and papa James, piles of manuscripts, assorted books, and a large wooden box like an army footlocker labeled "Henry James." The secretary in charge said as far as she knew it had never been opened. I opened it.

PR interviewers are given a long leash to nourish their curiosities: "INTERVIEWER: Did you or Jonathan Cape put the comma in the title of the English edition [of *Run River*]? DIDION: It comes back to me that Cape put the comma in." But the questions generally move in productive directions. "INTERVIEWER: What about Rinehart? Is he related to Rinehart in the blues tradition, or Django Reinhardt, the jazz musician?" Ralph Ellison, interviewed in 1955, replied:

My old Oklahoma friend, Jimmy Rushing, the blues singer, used to sing one song with a refrain that went:

Rinehart, Rinehart,
it's so lonesome up here
on Beacon Hill,

which haunted me, and as I was thinking of a character who was a master of disguise, of coincidence, this name with its suggestion of inner and outer came to my mind. Later I learned that it was a call used by Harvard students when they prepared to riot, a call to chaos. Which is very interesting, because it is not long after Rinehart appears in my novel that the riot breaks out in Harlem.

Some writers open their hearts to eulogize lost friends and salute cherished literary influences. James Salter's tribute to Robert Phelps, a founder of Grove Press and a scholar of Colette, is powerful: "[*Earthly Paradise*] is a wonderful book. I had a copy of it that he inscribed to me. My oldest daughter died in an accident, and I buried it with her because she loved it too." A 1966 interview with Saul Bellow begins unexpectedly with a stirring tribute to an unfashionable writer:

The development of realism in the nineteenth century is still the major event of modern literature. Dreiser, a realist of course, had elements of genius. He was clumsy, cumbersome, and in some respects a poor thinker. But he was rich in a kind of feeling that has been ruled off the grounds by many contemporary writers—the kind of feeling that every human being intuitively recognizes as primary.… He somehow conveys, without much refinement, depths of feeling that we usually associate with Balzac or Shakespeare.

The emotional register of the interviews is exceedingly wide, and not always solemn. Some writers, moved by a spirit of mischief, whimsy or revenge, initiate counterstrikes against book reviewers. William Gaddis remarked in 1987:

The daily reviewer for *The New York Times* was relieved because [*Carpenter's Gothic*] was short, so I believe he actually read it. Though he reviewed *JR* ten years before, in reviewing *Carpenter's Gothic* he said he had *not* read *JR*—couldn't follow it, too long and complicated. That kind of irresponsibility doesn't cheer a writer up, but, of course, these things are not on my mind when I'm working.

Writers are given the chance to illuminate, from oblique angles, close personal relationships. Elizabeth Hardwick commented on Robert Lowell's taste in women: "He liked women writers and I don't think he ever had a true interest in a woman who wasn't a writer—an odd turn-on indeed and one I've noticed not greatly shared."

For this four-volume Picador edition—which includes the famous reproductions of manuscript pages at the head of the Q&As but not the original photographs of the authors—Gourevitch was obliged to choose sixty-four interviews from the *PR* canon. Many of his choices reveal judicious taste and sound judgment: Ezra Pound, Truman Capote, James Baldwin, Dorothy Parker, Eudora Welty, Jorge Luis Borges, Alice Munro, John Ashbery and Toni Morrison, as well as Bellow, Singer, Ellison, Roth and Rushdie. Gourevitch has done his homework: he wisely passed over certain Q&As that don't soar—with Robert Penn Warren, Doris Lessing and Milan Kundera, for instance—and he rightly selected Didion's 2006 interview rather than a weaker one from 1978. (Only a handful of authors were interviewed twice.) Some of the writers that Gourevitch has included—James M. Cain, Evelyn Waugh, Philip Larkin and Isak Dinesen—were caught in the final years of their lives, and these interviews lend a melancholy, autumnal mood to the collection. The interview with Dinesen, conducted in Rome in 1956, is especially memorable: "I feel that the world is happy and splendid and goes on but that I'm not part of it. I've come to Rome to try and get into the world again. Oh, look at the sky now!" (She died in 1962.)

Gourevitch has rescued at least one masterpiece from the *PR* archives: Marina Warner's 1981 interview with Rebecca West (1892–1983). Today West is best known for her monumental nonfiction book on Yugoslavia, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), but she also wrote celebrated books on St. Augustine and the Nuremberg trials, in addition to four collections of essays and seven novels. The interview imparts to the reader West's wit, elegance, lucidity, iconoclasm and breathtaking memory:

If I wanted to write anything that attacked anybody, I used to have a look at [Mark Twain's] attack on Christian Science, which is beautifully written. He was a man of very great shrewdness. The earliest article on the Nazis, on Nazism, a sort of first foretaste, a prophetic view of the war, was an article by Mark Twain in *Harper's* in, I should think, the nineties. He went to listen to the Parliament in Vienna and he describes an awful row and what the point of view of Luger, the Lord Mayor, was,

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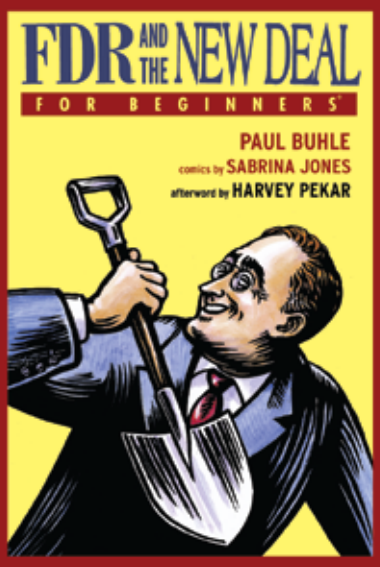

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and the man called George Schwartz, I think, who started the first Nazi paper, and what it must all lead to. It's beautifully done. It's the very first notice that I've ever found of the Austrian Nazi party, that started it all.

While the voices of novelists and poets echo through these new volumes, Gourevitch has not neglected *PR*'s tradition of occasionally sitting down with critics and editors. Antonio Weiss's lengthy 1991 Q&A with Harold Bloom is a pungent, exhilarating ride, and a stirring defense of close reading against the encroachments of arid literary theory. When discussing what Bloom calls "the younger members of my profession…the gender and power freaks," the critic becomes a one-man firing squad: "I realized in latish middle age that, no better or worse, I was surrounded by a pride of displaced social workers, a rabblement of lemmings, all rushing down to the sea carrying their subject down to destruction with them." The 1994 interview with former Alfred A. Knopf and *New Yorker* editor Robert Gottlieb bends the format: the Q&A is augmented by interviews with writers Gottlieb has edited over the years, among them Toni Morrison, Mordecai Richler and John le Carré, who said, "Occasionally I'll say I disagree, in which case we will leave the matter in suspense until I recognize that he is right. In no case have I ever regretted taking Bob's advice. In all the large things, he's always been right." Gottlieb lacks Bloom's verbal stamina, but he doesn't hide his views. On what writers want: "A quick response…it's cruelty to animals to keep them waiting." On an "amazing revelation" he had at age 40: "It suddenly came to me that not every person in the world assumed, without thinking about it, that reading was the most important thing in life." On his vocation: "I have fixed more sentences than most people have read in their lives." One senses that Gottlieb is a private man, and that his *PR* interview is the fullest portrait of him that we are likely to read.

Gourevitch has filled these volumes with riches, but his stewardship of the project is not without blemishes. In his introduction to Volume One, he all but neglects to explain the criteria by which he made his selections, and some of those choices are perplexing. Lackluster Q&As with Hemingway, Styron and Graham Greene are here, while sprightly and revealing sessions with John Updike, Mary McCarthy and Tennessee Williams are not. The interviews with V.S. Naipaul, Richard Price, Paul Auster, Peter Carey, Joyce Carol Oates, Stephen King and Maya Angelou, all of which made the cut, are not without interest, but in terms of liveliness and overall quality they are inferior to the sessions with Nabokov, Neruda, Hardwick, Doctorow, DeLillo, Salter and Edel, to name just a few authors locked out of these four volumes. As you stroll through the collection, the questions accumulate. Why include an interview with Georges Simenon but not one with Louis-Ferdinand Céline, who is cited as a principal influence by many writers in *PR*'s interview series? Why did Gourevitch include a 1998 interview with Martin Amis when the 1975 Q&A with his father, Kingsley, is funnier? Why include Harold Pinter but not Tom Stoppard? Why Haruki Murakami instead of Kazuo Ishiguro? Why Jack Gilbert but not W.H. Auden? Perhaps only commercial considerations can explain the inclusion of García Márquez and the exclusion of Octavio Paz, whose 1991 interview with Alfred Mac Adam is far more satisfying and revealing.

As the journal's longtime editor, George Plimpton had literary tastes that leaned toward the conventional, but *The Paris Review* interview series did not ignore writers who might be considered experimental or "difficult": José Saramago, William Gass, John Barth, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Julio Cortázar, Stanley Elkin, Carlos Fuentes and Javier Marías have all been interviewed by *PR*. None were selected by Gourevitch; the experimental wing of fiction has been neglected in the Picador volumes. Thomas LeClair's 1977 interview with William Gass, a kind of aesthete's manifesto and a vivid portrait in self-loathing, was celebrated around the time of its publication. Is it perhaps too dark and bawdy for Gourevitch's taste? "INTERVIEWER: Have you spent a good part of your writing life getting even? GASS: Yes… yes. Getting even is one great reason for writing." Gass then cites a line from his story "In the Heart of the Heart of the Country": "I want to rise so high that when I shit I won't miss anybody." An especially glaring omission is the 1982 interview with New Directions founder James Laughlin, in which he recounted his relationships with Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound, and reflected on his wealthy father: "If I asked him for money, he'd say, 'Are you going to publish some more of those books that I can't understand?' And I'd say, 'Yes.' And he'd give it to me."

Obviously Gourevitch faced knotty choices in compiling these volumes. Still, one is left with the feeling that he has leaned too far in the direction of the genteel and the mainstream. These are polite volumes for our polite literary culture—a tidy, tranquil village instead of a sprawling, bustling city. ■

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THE SPOKANE/INLAND NORTHWEST *Nation* discussion group: PO Box 293, Cheney, WA 99004; locus29@aol.com.

SAN ANTONIO *Nation* discussion group. Second Mondays, Grady's Bar-B-Q at San Pedro and Jackson Keller. Contact lenwheeler@satx.rr.com for more information.

RICHMOND, VA, *Nation* discussion group is seeking new members. Contact Wayne Young, (804) 232-8521, youngwayne88838@aol.com.

A NEW *NATION* UTAH YAHOO GROUP has been created at groups.yahoo.com/group/thenationutah. To join, contact Sam Evans, (801) 791-8089 or sameritech@yahoo.com.

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE HOUSTON *NATION* DISCUSSION group? Contact Charles Mauch at (713) 524-2492 or e-mail chasmauch@aol.com.

ORGANIZATIONS

MONTPELIER, VT, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is meeting. For information call (802) 229-9918 or e-mail lnichol@vtlink.net.

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The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $210 for 50 words; $260 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Amanda at (212) 209-5414.

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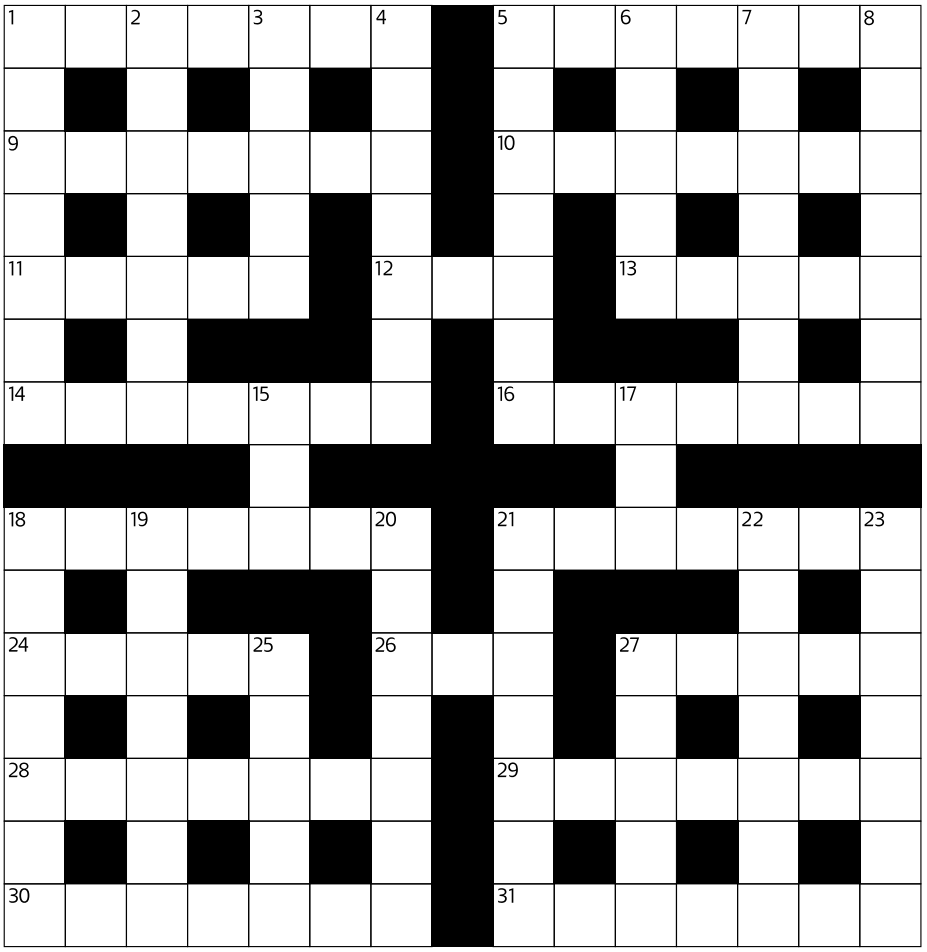
Puzzle No. 1588

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and **5** No yellow? One shouldn't stop so! (7,7)

9 Sales decoration of old? (John's country relative had one, in other words.) (7)

10 An old-time lover, possibly remembered for his slips. (7)

11 He was bound to take his turn. (5)

12, **15** and **27** down A vampire might be with a vengeance. (3,3,5)

13 Both on guard, to show what might fasten things inside. (5)

14 Nude film, without exceptional beginning, might make you attentive.(7)

16 What might be worn? Look in the transport. (7)

18 A short time with nothing having the spirit of propriety. (7)

21 The glove one carries has to be casual. (3-4)

24 Extort, to be precise. (5)

26 See 17 down

27 Might it make a philosopher rasher? (5)

28 Split-shingle might be basic. (7)

29 Change speed on foot, marked by signs of stress. (7)

30 A plotter might have them. (7)

31 See 1 down

DOWN

1 and **31** across Bill (and one associated with a waggish following) for college? (7,3,4)

2 Stretched to the limit, you'll have it. (7)

3 Pertaining to decimal, frequently? (5)

4 Could be a liter of extract from clover, perhaps. (7)

5 It may be outdated, but Shaw made it associated with Monday once. (7)

6 A rod or a perch might be used for it. (5)

7 False guise no one might associate with a burning cause. (7)

8 There's a lot of idle talk about what's in vogue for the protection of cars. (7)

15 See 12 across

17, **26** and **18** down One way to approach pool? People lose their cool this way. (3,3,4,3)

19 Makes the note silver, perhaps; some ringers make them. (7)

20 Is just like lighters, perhaps. (7)

21 In the main, it's endlessly 18 down. (4,3)

22 A song about someone who is no gentleman, but the setting is simple. (7)

23 In a manner impenetrably stupid. (7)

25 Not a thick string, but only one with an obsession has it. (5)

27 See 12 across

This puzzle originally appeared in the June 7, 1975, issue.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2199

	B	I	G	G	A	M	E	H	U	N	T	E	R	
G		B		E		E		I		O		P		A
O	V	E	R	T	A	X		G	I	N	S	I	N	G
L		A		O		I		H		I		C		E
D	O	M	I	N	I	C	A	N		N	O	U	N	S
L				W		O		O		T		R		
E	S	P	R	I	T		B	O	N	E	M	E	A	L
A		O		T		O		N		R		A		I
F	A	R	T	H	I	N	G		A	V	E	N	U	E
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F	I	F	T	H		O	V	E	R	N	I	G	H	T
I		O		E		U		F		T		R		I
B	E	L	L	J	A	R		A	B	I	G	A	I	L
S		I		O		S		C		O		I		L
	D	O	U	B	L	E	M	E	A	N	I	N	G	

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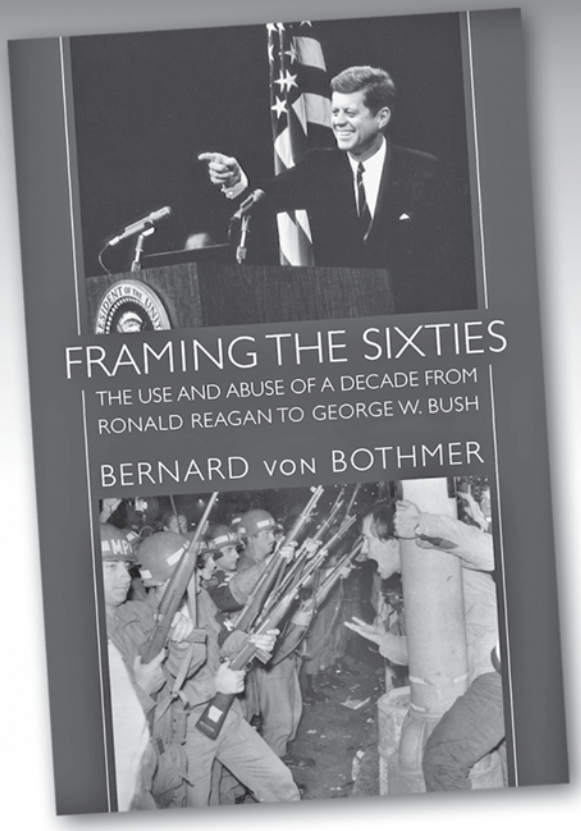

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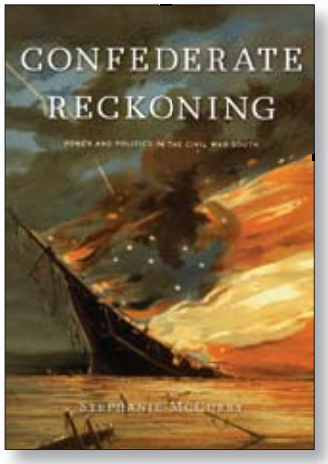

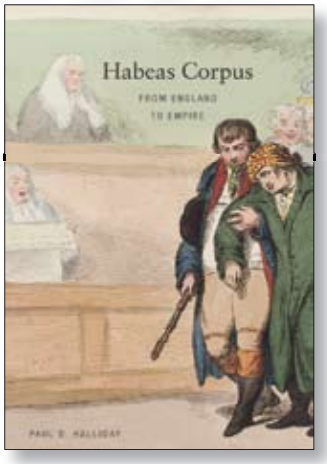

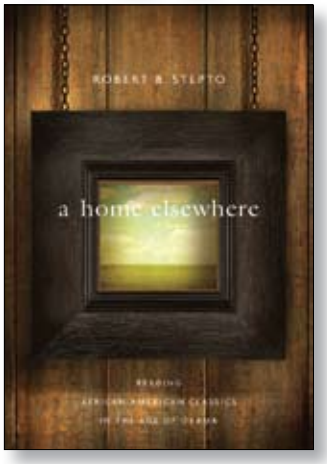

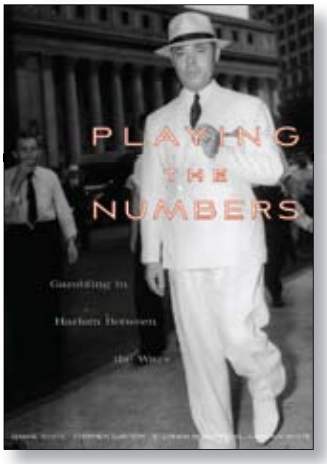

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